I, Geniene P Delahunty, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Urban Educational Leadership.

It is entitled:
Untold Stories: Perspectives of Principals and Hispanic Parents of English Language Learners.

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Untold Stories: Perspectives of Principals and Hispanic Parents of English Language Learners.

A Dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School
of the University of Cincinnati
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in the Urban Educational Leadership Program of
the School of Education
of the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of principals and Hispanic parents of English language learners about the school experience of their students. Through collecting stories (narrative) of their children’s school experiences, I was able to determine that the key perceptions of principals and Hispanic parents focused on their dual responsibilities and limitations at home and at school. These responsibilities and limitations have both positive and negative effects on the schooling experience of students.

Data were collected by conducting open ended interviews. My goal was to allow the untold stories of the participants to provide the perspectives of schooling experiences that a standard interview session might not have been able to capture. Narrative inquiry was the research methodology used. There is an urgent need for the narratives of parents to be heard, to help urban educators and policy makers embrace the dichotomy of students’ home cultures and students’ school cultures (Auerbach, 2002). Narratives were then transcribed and coded in order to identify major themes. The resultant themes that emerged were: home-school expectations, communication barriers, and sense of community.

Schools that tap into the strengths of their students, parents, and communities will build an additive school model (as opposed to a deficit model) that will reap benefits for generations to come. More importantly English language learners who have positive school experiences achieve greater success and experience a higher graduation rate.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the support and love of my family; you made me work harder and showed me incredible patience with the time this work took away from being with you. I am forever grateful for your encouragement.

To my husband: You have taught me the meaning of commitment and unconditional love. Words will never be enough to thank you for your support and love through this process and our life together. Thank you for enduring long nights without me at your side.

To my boys: You have inspired me by your bravery, resilience and for allowing me to be your mommy. I have learned how to be a better educator-by helping you overcome challenges in your own language learning and schooling, and you have taught me how to be a better mommy-by your open hearts.

To my parents: You instilled in me a love for learning. You encouraged me to keep trying new things until I found my passion. Thank you for showing me the world!

To my friends: You were always willing to listen to an idea and encouraged me to press on. Specifically to Paul and Kelly, thank you for being my unofficial mentors. You are unconditional in your support and guidance and that helped those long nights seem less daunting. For your friendship and wise words, I thank you.

Special thanks to my committee who has been with me since the beginning of this journey. Each one of you played a unique and important role in this study. Dr. Koschoreck, you introduced me to ‘social justice’ and the rest is history. Thank you for being you!
My final thanks are to the parents and principals who participated in this study. You are the heart of this research. Thank you for sharing your experiences with us.
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Chapter One – Introduction/Literature Review

Context - “How I came from there to here”, by Geniene P. Delahunty.

My personal journey can be told in many chapters. It is my story as an immigrant girl from a third world country where I lived in privilege. It is a story of how when I first moved to a first world country, I learned about discrimination. I was born into a middle class family who enjoyed the luxury of the suburbs. My school experience was very positive, and I was known dually as a model student and good athlete. I attended a multi-racial high school (one of two in our city), against the advice of my elementary principal. He believed according to my aptitude tests that I would excel at a technical career high school, as my mechanical aptitude far exceeded any other on the test. Instead of following the principal’s advice, my mother enrolled me in the same high school that my sister was attending. This would be my first experience, not only in an all girl environment, but also in a multi-racial school.

For the first time I was able to experience things with girls with different linguistic backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures. I learned phrases in Portuguese from my friend Ana, how to really cook Indian food from my friend Pretty, and why calling my Cypriote friend, ‘Greek’ was so offensive. These bilingual (and sometimes multi-lingual) friends experienced academic success even though their home language was something other than English. I valued language and diversity; and my love for culture was enhanced through my daily experiences with them.

After graduating high school my parents and I moved to America. Ah! The land of opportunity! America was portrayed as an idealistic realm of wealth and fame, from what we learned by our limited TV exposure and access. Nancy Drew (the main character of my childhood fictional literature) drove a yellow convertible as she unraveled mysteries, and I
couldn’t wait to own more than one pair of jeans and to see a yellow convertible like the one Nancy Drew drove. I lived a conservative and relatively sheltered life and the cultural and linguistic exposure in South Africa would not help prepare me for the culture shock I would experience when moving to Cincinnati, Ohio in the balmy summer of June 1993.

As a teenager in America I relied on my first language and my exemplary primary and secondary education to enable me to adapt to the new culture I was exposed to. Yet there were small idiosyncrasies and terms that a book couldn’t teach me. *Wayne’s World* (the movie) had just been released the summer I moved to the U.S. I still hear catch phrases from that movie used in everyday conversation, and recall how confused I was trying to navigate the American slang. Academically I was ready for college; however I chose to return to high school to experience the American 12th grade – and to have one more year to adapt to the educational structure and expectations. My personal goal was to experience the cultural phenomenon of high school, which was uniquely different in construct and focus.

That year served as a catalyst to study music. After graduation, I made the realization that a performance degree didn’t qualify me for the work force, except as a performer; I had to make another choice. I reflected back to the days of teaching my peers math problems on the lids of pizza boxes and decided the best use of my skills would be to obtain my teaching degree. I returned for my Masters in Educational Foundations and earned my teaching license; and so my career as an educator began.

During my fourth year of teaching I entered the Administrative Development Academy at the University of Cincinnati and fast tracked through the Educational Leadership master’s degree program. As a music teacher, I serviced all students and worked with all teachers. This
exposure to the whole building allowed me to see building-wide issues and to contribute to solutions. However, poor examples of administrators, plus the desire to be more impactful led me to pursue Educational Leadership as my next career move. I was eager to find opportunities for leadership and enthusiastically accepted any and every building leadership opportunity. With a degree in hand and a resume that was not receiving any job offers I felt it was best to continue on with my studies, especially since I had been hearing about a topic that was becoming of more interest to me. Classes that dealt with student services and the English Language Learner (ELL) community had sparked my interest and captured my attention. I was impassioned to learn all I could, and so another chapter of my journey began. I connected with the plight of bilingual students, fighting to maintain their cultural identity and home language while at the same time choosing to adapt to the American way of life. I could empathize with language barriers, and how those presented academic roadblocks. I wanted to know more, and I wanted to find what needed to be done to remove these roadblocks. The combination of a nurturing faculty, good timing, and a need for something to hold onto in my professional life, inspired the journey of obtaining my doctoral degree. Each class provided a new opportunity to look at the ELL population and strengthen my belief that I had been called to enter the role of leader in urban education.

While I continued to serve students in the urban communities as an English Second Language teacher, I had also found opportunities to share my ELL knowledge and experiences to pre-service teachers on various college campuses, as well as current teachers who had ELL students for the first time. In my experience crossing geographical borders was simpler than navigating the path of cultural borders. Having to do both requires courage that few possess.
My desire was to help others navigate those borders while maintaining their cultural and linguistic integrity.

This past year my husband and I started a new chapter in our lives when we chose to adopt two brothers’ ages seven and thirteen, from Taiwan. They were classified as English language learners as their native language is Mandarin, and are still very limited in their English proficiency. Parenthood is a challenge all on its own; however, a layer of difficulty is definitely added by navigating student services and ensuring that our children are receiving the instructional accommodations and interventions that they are entitled to.

As a teacher of English language learners, I have my own perspective of their schooling experiences. As a parent of English language learners, I realize now more than ever that the home-school connection is vital for their success. My view as both teacher and parent is limited in scope; however, my motivation is to provide school experiences built on the foundation of social justice. While this research details the perspectives of principals and parents of Hispanic English language learners, reflections of my own children’s schooling experience will be added to the final chapter, after the concluding discussion. My hope is that by sharing my personal connection with this research, I will be able to provide the reader with another dimension to the voices being shared. The next section will examine the problems that challenge parents and educators alike.

**Statement of the Problem**

The educational experience in urban America has dramatically changed in scope and sequence, as have the demographics of who is served in our educational institutions.
According to the National Center for Education Statistics, (2004), two of every three children coming to school from a home where a language other than English is spoken are identified as Latino, and three quarters of Latino families in the United States speak Spanish at home. This is also the fastest growing group of immigrants. (Frattura, Capper & Scanlan, 2007, p. 151)

English language learners (ELL’s) are a subgroup of students that have multiple needs, both social and academic. It falls into the hands of leadership to ensure that the schooling experience they have is both successful and positive. This is often accomplished by welcoming and respecting the students’ home culture and language. “Minority-language students develop a stronger sense of self and are more likely to adapt themselves academically when teachers show them that their language and culture are welcomed too” (Peterson & Heywood, 2007, p. 518).

The impact of having to ‘erase’ home culture and language impacts more lives than just the lives of students. An example of this ‘erasing’ in its simplest form is the lack of value educators exhibit for different cultures and languages. Parents have shared how important it was for their children to be mainstreamed into the culture and language of the classroom (predominantly English); however, when their own culture and language were not valued, their participation (defined here as active communication with school) decreased. While cultural identity is not the focus of this research, it is impossible to review literature about language and culture of immigrants, without discussing identity, to some degree. Borba (2000) describes the inevitable choices as follows:
Immigrant children feel tremendous pressure to assimilate into American culture and often believe they must give up their family’s ways of doing things. Teachers contribute to this view when they suggest that the child leave behind his or her old life. (p. 684)

High drop-out rates as well as disengagement from the schooling experience (on the student and parent level) occur all too frequently. “In recent years, high school dropout rates for African American students in the U.S. have been twice as high as the rate for White students and four times higher than Whites for Hispanic students” (Child Trends Databank, 2003, as cited by Castro Atwater, 2008, p. 246). Dropping out of school is a shocking choice to mainstream Americans, who do not have the same set of struggles and barriers that most subgroups do. Fry (2003) captures the heart of the struggle leading to this ‘choice’:

Given the academic circumstance Latino students are in, it is not surprising that many of them find these educational barriers insurmountable and opt to leave school instead.

More than any other group, Latino students are the most likely to drop out of school.

(Cited by Olivas, 2004, p.2)

School climate plays a significant role in how engaged or disengaged students remain in their own educational experience. Negative or even toxic school climates may lead to school dropout. “According to the U.S. Department of Education (1999), establishing a school environment that respects individual differences and promotes appreciation of cultural diversity can impact teachers’ and students’ efforts to eliminate racial and sexual harassment” (Castro Atwater, 2008, p. 251).

The multi-faceted needs that come with ELL’s present new areas of training beyond mere awareness. The U.S. has had their decades of awareness, and we now need to move to practical
solutions that impact our pedagogy and our thinking. Solutions need to be found on how to transcend the barriers that prevent mutual understanding and partnerships between home and school. The great divide has to be permeated, “Yet in schools that serve a high number of immigrant families, many immigrant parents and school staff do not know how to transcend the barriers, that currently keep them at a distance” (Waterman, 2008, p. 160). Herein lies the reason for this study. If this divide that separates parents and administrators from working together toward successful and meaningful schooling experiences for their children exists, what can be done about it? How do parents and administrators feel and think about what happens on the school campus? What role do parents play in the support and continuation of education at home? What role do administrators feel parents should have throughout their children’s school experience? If we don’t hear from parents and administrators and examine their perspectives, values, and beliefs, these questions will remain unanswered – and the problems will remain unsolved. The next section examines the purpose for this research study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the expectations that Hispanic parents of ELL’s have of public schools for the education of their children, and simultaneously, what expectations do school principals have of the same set of parents. As these viewpoints are not always voiced, yet alone shared, it is vital that clear understandings exist between the adults in our schools to create positive, safe and meaningful experiences for the students who are in their care.

One research site was chosen that exhibits a growing population of Hispanic families. Four families and two administrators were interviewed and asked to share openly about the
schooling experiences of Hispanic ELL’s. This study will help educators and parents alike realize the unspoken misconceptions and expectations that have previously not been communicated. While previous studies (Borba, 2009; Castro Atwater, 2008) have focused on the academic and linguistic progress of the students, this study aimed to fill a gap in the literature by seeking the perspectives of the adults that guide the students’ schooling experience.

At a time like this, when the nation’s teaching force is encountering an increasing number of children from immigrant families—children who speak little or no English on arrival at school, children whose families may be unfamiliar with the demands of American schooling—the challenge is even greater. (Fillmore & Snow, 2000, p.3)

**Research questions**

The research questions are:

1. What expectations do Hispanic parents of ELL’s and principals of ELL’s have for their ELL’s students’ educational experiences?

2. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents of Hispanic ELL’s and principals of ELL’s in terms of educating their students?

3. What barriers exist that impact Hispanic ELL students’ schooling experiences?

These research questions were developed after a review of past research and literature. The next section includes the areas of research that were included in the review of literature.

**Background/Literature Review**

**Narrative as research.** My storytelling is not merely a recount of the events in my life that have brought me to be a doctoral student and now a parent. It is also narrative that could be
used as data, which would address research topics such as cultural adaptation, life choices, and the like. Savin-Baden and Niekerk (2007) comment on the use of narrative by saying:

In narrative inquiry we would argue that the focus of analysis is the people who tell us stories about their lives, the stories being the means of understanding our participants better. Thus, storytelling tends to be closer to actual life events than other methods of research that are just designed to elicit explanations. (p. 464)

Narrative is not only a more personal way of looking at data; it is a writing style that transforms the researcher into storyteller. Polkinghorne adds that “by changing their voice to storyteller, researchers will also change the way in which the voices of their ‘subjects’ or participants can be heard” (1997, p.3). This style of data collection is important to my research purpose and design, as I am choosing to explore the road less travelled, by engaging with the voices of parents. Their stories will not be used to explain or to explicitly answer questions; instead, they will be shared in their fullness, to capture the hopes, dreams, concerns and fears of parents of English language learners in our public schools.

Narrative inquiry's recent emphasis on how people understand themselves and their experiences began in the mid-1970s, according to Bruner (1986), when “the social sciences had moved away from their traditional positivist stance towards a more interpretive posture” (p. 8). This self-reflective style has developed into an asset for qualitative researchers, who seek understanding from their participants and environment, which mere observation would not provide.

Consejos (cultural narratives/stories) are a fundamental part of Hispanic culture. Carger (2005) in her work with a young Latino boy in an urban city shares the consejos told by the boy’s mother. The stories helped her understand: “The concept of ‘bien educado’, the aspiration
of many Mexican-origin families for their children. It signifies a sense of being educated that goes beyond academics to include respect, faith, moral development, and familial and community responsibility” (p. 232). These social issues transcend the boundary of school and home, education and economy, and individual and community. These issues are lived (experienced) and are shared through the closest means available – narrative.

Narrative inquiry is a form of experiential inquiry (Polkinghorne, 1997). Experience, according to narrative theory, is structured narratively (Carr, 1986). People experience the world through story (consejos), and thus it seems logical that they should be able to tell about those experiences through stories.

The study of narratives has emerged in recent years as a large and diverse area of research. Narrative inquiry as a research approach provides the theoretical framework that invites and supports social justice, equity, and democracy in the classroom (Ayers, 2004; Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005). This framework is the foundation upon which this research is built. By sharing the stories of parents and principals that do not have frequent podiums for their voices; I aim to support social justice and equity in arenas that can easily perpetuate the opposite.

Following are reviews of literature pertaining to the key areas addressed in this research design.

**Schooling experiences of English language learners.** The rate of growth for ELL’s in our public school classrooms is staggering. Currently, “Hispanic students make up one-fifth (20.5 percent) of the United States’ public school population” (Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008, p.1). Teachers entering the work force will encounter students who have a home language other than English. Gonzalez points out that “as the Latina/o population continues to grow, so will its school-aged population, and this will require greater emphasis and investment in public
education that strives for equality” (2007, p. 342). ELL’s are defined as: “A national-origin-minority student who is limited-English-proficient. This term is often preferred over limited-English-proficient (LEP) as it highlights accomplishments rather than deficits” (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

For years the misclassification of students has placed them (mostly African Americans and Hispanic students) into dead end tracks/classes. Misclassification now seems like a minor problem compared to the linguistic challenges that ELL’s are facing during their daily schooling experience, especially with the onslaught of standardized testing. The linguistic ability of the normative group is not comparable to the linguistic ability of the growing percentage of ELL’s. However, a new misclassification results from a misunderstanding, that limited English proficiency is equated with cognitive deficits. The subgroup (also used in this paper as student group) termed ‘Hispanic’ is not always comprised of students who are limited English proficient (LEP); however the majority of students do co-exist in both subgroups¹.

The 2009 American Community Survey indicated that 89.5% of the Central American population, 76.1% of the Mexican population, and 70.6% of the Asian population in the U.S.A speak languages other than English at home, compared to 20.0% for the total U.S.A population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, as cited by Endo, 2011, p. 20).

¹ State report cards must disaggregate data by the following subgroups: All Students; Major Racial & Ethnic groups; Students with Disabilities; Limited English Proficient; Economically disadvantaged; Migrant and Gender. U.S. Department of Education.
According to González (2007), one way to understand the history and educational inequity of Latinas/os is through data. Researchers such as Solórzano and others have revealed extensive data that affirm the inequities, especially in terms of school drop-out rates. Villenas & Deyhle (1999) explain that:

Latinos also suffer some of the highest drop-out rates at thirty-five percent and, for immigrant Latino youth, at an astonishing forty-six percent. The dropout rate for U.S. born Latinos is twice as high as the rate for Whites and half as high as the rate for African Americans. (p. 418)

Dropout rates are just one of the signs that the schooling experience of Hispanic youth is far from favorable. Academic achievement gaps that exist in educational success are also not the only cause for concern. While data show an increase in Latino enrollment in higher education, a proportional increase in their rates of success is not evident (Villalpando, 2004). The same can be said for elementary and high school data, which have shown the graduation trend (and again the drop out trend) to be one of great concern among educators. It is not the achievement gaps or drop out data alone that alarm educators and researchers alike. The data showing longitudinal trends, without signs of change, alarms us most of all. With the inequity that exists between Whites and Latinas/os, what accentuates the concern and need for change is that this gap has remained nearly unchanged since 1980 (González, 2007). These data drives us to ask those pivotal questions: what is the schooling experience for Hispanic youth?

Lather (1986), states that “doing empirical research offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that the research process enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations” (p. 263). The segregation of
Mexican-American children has already been justified by their “linguistic deficiencies” and this overt form of educational racism is just one historical example of the schooling experiences of Latina/o children (González, 2007).

In what Crotty (1998) calls the culture of silence, “the oppressed are submerged in their situation and as long as they remain so submerged they cannot be active subjects intervening in reality. They cannot become engaged in the struggle for their own liberation”, (p. 155). In the U.S. where failure within education is unacceptable, especially with the mandate of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the normative standard of one dominant culture is what is sustaining failure.

The NCLB Act was introduced in 2001 as a way to add accountability of student achievement through standardized testing as well as assessing teacher quality. This Act has added pressure to linguistic minorities amongst other subgroups because of the format and use of academic language in standardized tests. As a teacher of English as a second language, and a parent of ELL students, this pressure is felt dually at home and at school. Standardized tests and national policies like that of NCLB do little to recognize the multi-level needs and abilities of our students.

While a recent trend in the classroom has been to erase all sense of individual difference by claiming that we should live in a color-blind society, this does little except feed deficit thinking.

Despite the current legal and ethical agreement that race and skin color should not matter, they very clearly do: African-Americans and Hispanics were three times as likely to be poor as non-Hispanic Whites in 2001; and in 2002, 24% of African-Americans and 20%
of Hispanics experienced hardship over housing compared with only 10% of Whites.

(Finnegold & Wherry, 2004, as cited by Castro Atwater, 2010, p. 246)

Movements in teacher education to address diversity and culturally responsive practices, swings the pendulum from color blind societies to overt practices in segregation. According to Williams (1997), modern color-blindness “…constitutes an ideological confusion at best, and denial at its very worst…Much is overlooked in the move to undo that which clearly… matters just by labeling it that which ‘makes no difference’” (p. 7, as cited by Castro Atwater, 2008, p. 247).

If we fail to recognize our differences, we will inevitably view our diversity as a deficit and not strength. “Mainstream American society still refuses to acknowledge the experiences of people of color”, (González, 2007, p. 335). How then can we re-educate society? We can start within our schools, with our leadership, our parents and our children. This dialogue needs to occur within our classrooms, amongst our children and teachers. Too many of our youth are experiencing what Valenzuela (1999) identifies as “subtractive schooling”. Wide-scale achievement problems occur with minority youth in the U.S. These occur in “school-based relationships and organizational structures and policies designed to erase students’ culture” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 10). When our students are all viewed as the same, their native culture and inherently their native language (and subsequently, their identity) soon disappear; and are viewed as insignificant compared to the dominant English, White dominant culture.

What we know for certain is that our current practices cannot continue. “Status quo teaching practices, have served to standardize and normalize whiteness to the extent that it is viewed as objective, non-raced”, (Chaisson, 2004, p. 347). Our education systems cannot persist to perpetuate academic inequities as this perpetuates social injustice in its most evident form.
Schools often function according to the dominant cultural experiences of the Euro-American student which automatically tends to erase the voice of minority students (Chaisson, 2004).

Children of non-white immigrants may not even have the opportunity of gaining access to middle-class white society, no matter how acculturated they become. Joining those native circles to which they do not have access may provide a ticket to permanent subordination and disadvantage. Remaining securely ensconced in their co-ethnic community, under these circumstances, may be not a symptom of escapism but the best strategy for capitalizing on otherwise unavailable material and moral resources…a strategy of paced, selective assimilation may prove the best course for immigrant minorities. (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p. 96)

This might explain how some immigrants adapt well to American society and yet others do not. While educational institutions are concerned with graduating moral and concerned citizens, the main focus is successfully educating students. Students who can engage in social dialogue have not necessarily maintained mastery of academic English proficiency.

Adapting to American culture is not a mark of success; however, it may be one of the goals of our immigrant students. The immigrant mentality is often the motivator to achieve success. Xu, et al. (2007) in referring to the study on Chinese immigrants relates that each person carries an identity, sometimes strongly connected with a cultural group. I believe this cultural identity can be easily transferred to all immigrants and believe that identity should be classified as both a cultural identity and language identity. Through language we identify with others, and through language we share our cultural experience.
For immigrant children, learning English as a second language and dealing with school successfully are just one set of problems to be faced. Hanging on to their first language as they learn English is an equally great problem. Hanging on to their sense of worth, their cultural identities, and their family connections as they become assimilated into the school and society is a tremendous problem for all immigrant children. (Fillmore, 2000, p. 207)

Again I ask, what is the schooling experience of Hispanic English language learners? What we know from this review of literature is that what we don’t want the experiences to be: subtractive, deficit orientated and socially and educationally unjust.

Parents of ELL’s. Worthy & Rodriguez-Galindo interviewed Latino parents about their children’s bilingualism and acculturation into U.S. culture. Concerning speaking Spanish at home, they discovered:

Although immigrant parents and their children have historically received contradictory messages about the value of their home languages, maintaining and continuing to develop home language proficiency is important to immigrant parents for a variety of reasons, including communication with immediate and extended family and community, ethnic pride, and cultural maintenance. (2006, p.581)

While students are immersed in English in the school setting, or better yet a bilingual school setting, they return to homes where their native language is predominantly spoken. Students become desensitized to the ‘English only’ school environment and soon resist their ‘Spanish only’ home environments. Remaining bilingual and bicultural has tremendous value for students’ long term; however, with long term benefits not having immediate implications on student needs, the choice to hold onto their native/home culture presents as non-beneficial.
The price paid in choosing what to leave behind is not always predictable. What is viewed by some as a weakness (deficit) is viewed by others as a strength (funds of capital). Portes and Rumbaut (1994) write that when students leave behind their immigrant mentality— that inspires them to work to achieve a better future, they tend to fall in their school achievement and resort to menial jobs. I have already highlighted the fact that students are sometimes posed with the choices of assimilate and achieve or hold on to your heritage and fall behind. Both choices present unfair pressure on parents, who do everything within their ability to provide a nurturing environment, yet cannot fully understand the pressures their children face. Ada & Zubizarreta (2001) add the following to this scenario:

Unfortunately, most Latino parents do not understand how easy it is to lose a language. Since many learn their second language as adults when they are not at risk of losing their first language, and the second language is difficult to learn, it is not readily apparent that the situation for their children is quite the opposite. In fact, the preeminent status of English in schools and in the larger society, together with the social pressure to become “American” (i.e., speak English), is a tremendous pressure facing Latino children that makes it very difficult for them to maintain their native language. (p. 233)

Parent support is an important topic to discuss in terms of the home school connection, and the value that is placed on education (as part of the family paradigm). Students, who are supported at home, perform better in school. Family support reaches beyond boundaries of socio–economic status and home language. “Teachers and principals found that valuing the home language and culture led to greater parental support” (Peterson and Heywood, 2007, p. 533), and so this symbiotic relationship develops and feeds into this cycle of the home-school connection.
Faced with schedules that can limit the physical presence of parents on the school campus, a greater barrier that is permeating literature is that of language. This has become the great divide, whereby schools are not able to facilitate communication in the parents’ home language and parents’ are not able to speak English well enough to communicate their needs to school personnel.

The inability to speak English in school is a handicapping condition in many communities, particularly in places that have no programs designed to help children who are limited in English proficiency. Children in such situations, irrespective of background or age, are quick to see that language is a social barrier, and the only way to gain access to the social world of the school is to learn English. (Fillmore, 2000, p. 207)

How then do parents of English language learners cross that great divide of language, to actively participate in the school experience of their children? How do they live up to the cultural expectations that the school has in place – that to show value and support, equates to physical presence and interaction with school staff? Cummins (2001) found that “if ability to speak English and knowledge of North American cultural conventions are made prerequisites for ‘parental involvement,’ then many of those parents will be defined as apathetic and incompetent and will play out their pre-ordained role of non-involvement” (p. 8, as cited by Peterson & Heywood, 2007, p. 520).

Parents are only half of the symbiosis that supports children along their educational journey. Teachers and administrators eagerly wait to connect with parents and families, to map out the best course of action together to provide academic and social education to their students.
With the increasing numbers of immigrant students in American schools, we educators can no longer neglect to attend to the wealth of resources that these families bring to our schools—we must, instead, get to know what the resources are and how we can best utilize them. (DaSilva Iddings, 2009, p. 310)

**School culture.** Teachers have been challenged with NCLB, and have had little preparation to effectively teach and integrate in culturally responsive ways. While data exist that address the preparation of teachers to work with immigrant children, the issues of language and literacy are not well developed (González & Darling-Hammond, as cited by Fillmore, 2000).

Benevolent racism also reflects deficit views of Mexican immigrant parents. In some communities experiencing a recent influx of Latino immigrants, education professionals believe they are being generous by offering adult education opportunities, such as adult ESL classes or workshops related to reading with children. Yet these educators often structure these programs as a way to respond to the cultural and educational needs they assume Latino immigrants bring to the United States. (Villenas, 2000, as cited by Waterman, 2008, p. 145)

Teachers that show value for the linguistic capital their students possess subsequently encourage bilingualism and biculturalism. Alternatively, students who learn that the only means to success and achievement is through the mastery of the dominant academic language (English), find a disconnection to their home language, when it is something other than English. Consequently, when students come to school, from home cultures that embrace family as a strength over individualization (Valdés, 1996); they experience what Fillmore (2000) describes as:
A culture that has a very different focus, one that emphasizes the primacy of the individual and considers family, group, and community needs subsidiary to individual needs. They soon discover that the school culture takes precedence over the home culture. Administrators and teachers do not accept as excuses for school absence the need to care for younger siblings when the mother is sick or to participate in a religious ritual in the community. (p. 12)

Teachers still equate parent involvement with parent presence on school campuses. Parental involvement has been correlated with parent’s abilities to “decode the system” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p13). This ability would be substantially hindered by being unable to access the language necessary to do the decoding. Despite the language barrier however is the underlying misconception that parents do not value education because of their lack of communication or presence on school campuses. Simply said, “increasing knowledge about family backgrounds and lifestyles is essential to improving teacher attitudes and skills for building home-school partnerships” (Borba, 2009, p. 683).

The persistent academic gap is not the only concern on the school campus. ELL’s are often viewed in terms of their deficits due to their language gaps, and are encouraged to turn away from their home roots to embrace the “English way.” Denial of your cultural identity should not occur within the walls of education. Children should not be forced to choose between (1) their family and culture and (2) school success. Yet this choice exists all too often, and in the high school settings this results in dropout rates that are staggering (Da Silva Iddings & Katz, 2007; Watt & Roessingh, 2001).

Past research has often engaged administrators and teachers in conversations about the success of their students, expectations of student achievement and the like; however, the voice of
ELL parents has been starkly missing, or has focused exclusively on parents (Peterson & Heywood, 2007).

**Clarification of “Hispanic”**

The term “Hispanic” needs to be clarified in terms of use and the researcher’s understanding of its meaning. While controversy exists over the derogatory nature of this ‘title’, it is specifically being chosen in the context of this research for the following reasons:

1) The U.S. Department of Education classifies Spanish speaking students as Hispanic. School report codes, district data and state reports all acknowledge ‘Hispanic’ as the name for the subgroup of Spanish speaking students. For consistency of data use, teachers, administrators and parents will have seen the identifier of ‘Hispanic’ on educational reports and materials.

2) Current research on ethnic groups appears to favor the term ‘Hispanic’, however a frequent interchange also occurs with Latino/Latina. While ‘Hispanic’ is gender neutral, ‘Latinos’ refers to males and ‘Latinas’ refers to females. For ease of reference, when referring to parents of either gender in this study, writing was simplified by using ‘Hispanic’. Current peer-reviewed academic journals with ‘Hispanic’ in the title are: *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies; Colorado Review of Hispanic Studies; Journal of Hispanic Higher Education; Journal of Hispanic Behavioral Sciences; Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy; Hispanic American Historical Review, Hispanic Research Journal; Texas Hispanic Journal of Law & Policy; Afro-Hispanic Review.*
3) National research/data organizations such as ‘Pew Research Center’ has a project entitled “Pew Hispanic Center2” which provides rich information about American demographics etc.

The controversy alluded to earlier exists between labeling that is imposed upon a population as well as the controversial discussion of self-identification. “Some of us want to be called Hispanics and object to “Latinos/as,” whereas others want to be called Latinos/as and will not tolerate “Hispanics,” (Gracia, 2000, p. 4). The discussion against the term ‘Hispanic’ ranges from moral, pragmatic, empirical and territorial beliefs (Gracia, 2000). “To no one’s surprise, the Latino National Political Survey also revealed that Hispanics overwhelmingly prefer to use national-origin terms as primary ethnic identifiers- i.e., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.-as one would expect” (De la Garza et al., 1992 as cited by, Gasbarra & Johnson, 2008, p. 119).

Why does this discussion occur and why is it relevant to this study? “These questions are important because names identify; they tell us both about what they name and about what we know concerning what they name” (Gracia, 2000, p.1). The choice to use the term ‘Hispanic’ was purposeful and intentional, to remain in line with academic terminology and in no way to show disrespect to the participants of this study.

The next section includes a discussion on the organization of the dissertation. Each chapter provides a brief summary of the key areas that are addressed.

**Organization of this Dissertation**

In chapter one I have discussed my own story as an immigrant to the United States and how my story has evolved to this point of being researcher. The statement of the problem was

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2 The Pew Hispanic Center is a project of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It is supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts. http://pewhispanic.org
given, as well as the purpose of this study. Research questions were discussed and clarification of the researcher’s use of the word “Hispanic” to identify the ethnicity of the parent participants was explained. With limited studies addressing the perceptions of parents in relation to the perceptions of parents regarding schooling experiencing of their students. Chapter one also included a review of literature on the topics of: narrative; schooling experiences of ELL, parents of ELL’s, and school culture.

Chapter two includes the design of this study. Participants are briefly introduced in the section that discusses data collection procedures. Data analysis procedures are outlines and a section on reflexivity as researcher is also addressed in this chapter. The significance and limitations of this study are briefly addressed, but will be covered in greater detail in chapter four after analysis of the data is detailed.

Chapter three begins with the introductions of the participants, followed by their individual stories. The themes that emerged from their stories are then categorized and discussed as narratives.

Chapter four includes a discussion each of the three themes that emerged through coding, implications for further research and for practice. The chapter also includes a section that connects my own narrative as an ELL mother.
Chapter Two - Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological framework, the qualitative methods chosen for this study, participant selection, data collection, the interview process, data analysis process, and how trustworthiness was attained in this study.

The first section of this chapter addresses the framework of the study using narrative inquiry. The second section describes the methods used to collect data to address the research questions posed in chapter one. This chapter also details the process of inviting and recruiting participants. Additionally data analysis methods are discussed. The final sections discuss the reflexivity of the researcher, and issues of trustworthiness between the participants and the researcher.

Methodological Framework

The focus of this research was to explore the perspectives of Hispanic parents of English language learners (ELL’s) as well as those perspectives of school administrators regarding Hispanic ELL students’ schooling experiences. The researcher believes that our experiences are captured and retold through stories, allowing for others to share our experiences through our narratives. These perspectives were best shared through narrative (narrative inquiry research). Wood (2010) captures this understanding by saying: “after all, a researcher undertakes narrative inquiry because he or she holds the theory that stories provide an entry point to human experiences and that human experiences matter” (p. 384).

Narrative is recognized as a useful tool in educational research. The aim is to capture the whole story, and to then understand that story as relevant to the participant and to the research questions. To allow the voice of the participants in the educational context to speak, we seek to
understand their values, attitudes, and choices that Grumet (1981) added, might be invisible if it were not for this form of research. Olson (1990) wrote that narratives “provide a format into which experienced events can be cast in an attempt to make them comprehensible, memorable, and shareable” (p. 100-101). It is this format which allows us as researchers, to determine what themes are shared between participants, allowing for stories to be analyzed as data. It is not just the sharing of stories that is important in this framework of study; it is bringing the stories together to provide practical solutions to shared concerns. According to Shijing and Connelly (2010), school-based narrative inquiry should seek to fulfill “practical ends of value to the practical settings studied” (p.349). While it should be made clear that this was not a case study, the social matters being addressed in this study could be transferred to a school with similar demographics and a similar growing population of English language learners.

As the realm of narrative inquiry is growing as a research idea, it was appealing to use for this study as it provides a freedom in data collection that structured interviews or focus groups would not allow.

The idea of narrative inquiry has captivated people across disciplines. The field is in its infancy and we agree with Mishler’s (1999) sentiment of being ‘opposed to any effort to police the boundaries’ (p.17). The criteria for ‘good’ narrative inquiry are under development, and each inquirer needs to develop the criteria appropriate to her or his work. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, pp. 477-478)

As the choice to use narrative inquiry research was made, it should be explained that that act of collecting stories was not the focus of this research. The stories are a means of assessing problems or needs that would otherwise not have the venue to be shared. There was a delicate
balance between wanting to share a told story and using a story as part of a bigger event. As the researcher, this balance was kept foremost in my thoughts when asking families to share their perspectives of their children’s schooling experiences. Being aware that parents might not want to share negative viewpoints of their school or educational system did not prompt me to lead discussions by inserting my own questions or viewpoints. Allowing the participants to share uninterrupted and to be an active listener to prompt their stories to flow was a goal during data collection.

Narrative inquiry research approach, with its ability to focus on critical life events while, at the same time, exploring holistic views, holds valuable potential for researchers in broad range of learning areas… it is well suited to addressing the issues of complexity and cultural and human centeredness because of its capacity to record and retell those events that have been of most influence on us. (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 1)

There has been a clear distinction in traditional research practices in representing the narrative voice. One viewpoint on narrative voice occurs whereby the researcher provides a voice to the voiceless and does little more than re-tell the stories to reveal a problem, which may be self indulgent and is not useful for purposes of this study. Another viewpoint is to provide opportunities for story telling about a subject, but to let the stories themselves provide the conclusions. My goal was to allow the untold stories of the participants to provide the perspectives of schooling experiences that a standard interview session might not have been able to capture. During a symposium, an auto-ethnographer was asked if story telling did little more than give power to “intellectual elites to control the stories that get told” (Ellis, 1997, p. 133).
Ellis wrote:

You are making an interesting point – that we have to figure out how to open up spaces for others to tell about their lives, but at least this method – storytelling about life epiphanies-is a strategy that most people employ in their everyday lives. It’s a familiar form. Perhaps telling our stores might encourage others to speak their silences as well. (1997, p. 134)

The method of collecting stories as narrative for analysis was not merely to allow the voiceless to be heard. These stories are untold, in that they are not being directly shared with administrators. As communication struggles have been a long standing barrier between maintaining open lines of communication between home and school (Ramirez & Soto-Hinman, 2009; Villa, 2003); this narrative provided a venue and stage to share without the constraint of language.

The purpose of this study was to examine the expectations families have for public schools and the expectations school administrators have for their families, and to determine if students are engaging in positive schooling experiences.

**Qualitative Method**

The design for this study was qualitative utilizing the method of Narrative Analysis or narratology, which “extends the idea of text to include in-depth interview transcripts, life history narratives and historical memoirs” (Patton, 2002, p. 115).

The method selected to collect stories was through the means of “narrative.” This is built on narrative inquiry research. Narrative (story telling) is a natural part of our daily lives, and it
was important for the participants to tell their stories of their experiences (as they experience the world) through narrative. Narrative falls into the large scope of qualitative research rather than quantitative research as it deals with words rather than numbers. Qualitative interviews offer the interviewer the flexibility to engage in a range of topics and allow the participant a chance to shape the content of the interview (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). “When the interviewer controls the content too rigidly, when the subject cannot tell his or her story personally in his or her own words, the interview falls out of the qualitative range” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104).

This story telling is an integral part of Hispanic culture. The term used is *consejos* (cultural narratives/stories). Carger (2005) in her work with a young Latino boy in an urban city shares the *consejos* told by the boy’s mother. Through her work of listening to and sharing in the *consejos* of a Latina parent, her ability to help her son and intervene in his school experiences and the experiences of the mother was extensive. She gained far more insight and information into their lives than she could have conducting one or several interviews.

Narrative inquiry is a form of experiential inquiry (Polkinghorne, 1997). Experience, according to narrative theory, is structured narratively (Carr 1986). People experience the world through story (*consejos*), and thus it seems logical that they should be able to tell about those experiences through stories.

As the administrators of the school are not part of the Hispanic culture, their stories do not hold the same cultural meaning. However, storytelling is not limited to one culture, and narrative crosses the boundaries of race and ethnicity, as it is bound in life experience.

The study of narratives has emerged in recent years as a large and diverse area of inquiry. With the underlying vein of supporting social justice and equity, this framework relates closely
to the research questions, aiming to achieve awareness of the schooling experiences of Hispanic English language learners.

Purposeful sampling was used for this study, due to the growing numbers of Hispanic ELL students present at this particular school. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), purposeful sampling is defined as: “Choosing subjects, places, and other dimensions of a research site to include in your research to enlarge your analysis or to test particular emerging themes and working hypothesis” (p. 274). Patton (2002) defines purposeful sampling as selecting information-rich cases for study in depth to illuminate the question under study. Parents of Hispanic ELL students attending the research site were immigrants (either first or second generation). The Hispanic ELL students ranged from first year students (typically Kindergarten) to 6th grade students. The principal, (who will be referred to as Mr. B.)\(^3\) and the assistant principal (who will be referred to as Ms. C.), were the administrators at the research site. Their stories will represent those of administration. The selection criterion for both principals and parents was their connection to Central Elementary School which served as the research site.

The research site is a school site and will now be referred to as ‘Central Elementary’. This pseudonym was fitting as the elementary school is centrally located, close to the board of education office, and also central to a major highway that runs through this Midwest urban area. Central Elementary has been serving as a PreK-5 building for the past 42 years. The most recent school enrollment on the 2009-2010 school report card\(^4\) was recorded as 713 students. Mr. B. indicated that his current enrollment at the time of interview was 804 students, 125 of which

\(^3\) Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity and maintain confidentiality of all participants.

\(^4\) Data retrieved from School Report card can be found on the State’s Department of Education website. A full citation cannot be provided without breaking confidentiality.
were English language learners (ELL). With 15% of the student body being designated as ELL students, Central will be held accountable this year for having a student group (formerly known as subgroup) of students in the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) group. All of the ELL students are Hispanic and have Spanish speaking parents (with a dominant home language of Spanish). These student groups are defined by the federal government, and become goals for academic achievement, which is measured on a yearly basis. It is significant for Central Elementary that not only is their ELL population growing each year, but that there is an added area of academic accountability to measure their success

**Student group:** Groups of the student population identified in terms of specific demographic or background characteristics. Some of the major student groups used for reporting NAEP results are those defined by students' gender, race or ethnicity, highest level of parental education, and type of school (public or nonpublic). Information gathered from NAEP background questionnaires also makes it possible to report results based on variables such as course-taking, home discussions of school work, and television-viewing habits. (http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/glossary)

All participants were members of the same school, which made their selection criteria and steps in selection somewhat easier. This reiterates the reason why purposeful sampling was chosen. Narrative inquiry requires a researcher to participate in what we call a ‘narrative inquiry space’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000). Thus, experiences are never taken at face value but are explored in terms of temporality, sociality, and place. As researcher and participant in the narrative inquiry space, the position and relationship of the researcher to the participants will be clearly defined and exposed within this study. This reflexivity is addressed in more detail in a later section; however, expanding on Connelly and Clandinin’s (2000) idea of space, it will be
vital to collect stories in context and to explore them in all terms of connections and relationships.

Similarly, Shijing and Connelly (2010) refer to this idea of research space as ‘life space.’ As the researcher entered the space where the research takes place, there are delicate measures to ensure that the space is treated respectfully and is exited politely. The interviews with the families took place within their home. The first session together set the tone for subsequent sessions, and our familiarity with each other and their families grew each time. To share their physical life space with me was not only enjoyable, but I was honored that they would trust me to enter their homes for this research. “Narrative inquirers need to be aware of the life space in its entirety, including her/his place in it, and include her/his participation and influence in research narrations, (Shijing & Connelly, 2010, p. 365). The research space (life space) of the administrators took place in their place of work. Their place of work was a suitable research space as their stories were being shared from the perspectives of administrators.

Participants

For this study, I interviewed one school principal, one assistant principal, and six Hispanic parents of English language learners. The families who participated in this study were all immigrants from Mexico currently residing in the same geographic area, within the residential district of the same elementary school. The principal and assistant principal of the research site were interviewed as the purpose was to compare stories of the parents and administrators regarding the students’ schooling experiences. Pseudonyms were used for the names of all participants, the schools, and the students mentioned.
Recruitment and Selection. The recruitment of the administrators of Central Elementary began via email. After approval for the research was granted by the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board (I.R.B.), I emailed the principal and assistant principal with a letter introducing myself and the parameters of my research. I asked and received permission to meet with the principal, to answer questions about the goals and purposes of the research study, and to gain site approval (even though district approval had already been received). After a brief meeting with the principal, he introduced me to the assistant principals. At the time of the introductions there were two assistants on staff. One was retiring within a few months, and the newly hired replacement was shadowing her during her final weeks to transition into her new position. As we stood in a conference room taking turns introducing each other, I asked for their verbal permission to pass out recruitment flyers (invitations to participate in the study) to the parents during open house. This was granted, and the next step in recruitment began. I was welcomed onto their campus and given a brief tour of their school. There was an immediate impression of the ‘open door policy’ that exists at Central elementary. After the school administration granted their permission to conduct research on their campus, I phoned the district office to obtain district permission to conduct research. After I signed and returned the appropriate district form, a letter of permission to conduct research at Central Elementary was emailed to me.

The next step was to invite parents to participate in the study. Invitations (English and Spanish letters) to participate in the research study were handed out in person during Central Elementary School’s open house, at the start of the school year, in August. Interested participants arranged their interview sessions with me via telephone. During our first meeting
together, consent was signed and all questions pertaining to the study were answered before any recording began. (See Appendix A).

**Data Collection Procedures**

The procedures used to collect data included open-ended interviews with guiding questions (See Appendix B), and field notes written at each session. Each interview was recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interviews with the families were recorded, translated into English, and then transcribed. Information collected during the interview sessions (including field notes and audio recordings) was protected and secured by being stored in a locked file cabinet.

Research objectives were discussed before audio recordings were collected, and all participants were able to review the informed consent forms before being signed. The forms were signed at the time of the recording session. Recorded interviews were transferred into typed transcripts. The administrator transcripts were transferred by the primary researcher, as they were recorded and typed in English. The parent transcripts were transferred by a translator approved by the I.R.B. The final English transcripts were provided to the primary researcher for data analysis via email. Once printed, all emails were deleted. All documents will be shredded upon completion of this dissertation. Final interview transcripts were made available to all participants for review and corrections. All names of participants, schools, school districts and cities were changed or altered by use of pseudonyms to ensure that confidentiality was maintained. All of the parent participants spoke Spanish, although one parent constantly switched between English and Spanish.
Interview, in a narrative context, does not mean question-and-answer instruments or dialogue (Mishler, 1986). Open ended questions/guiding questions were presented to the participants to help prompt their story telling, when necessary. Interviews were conducted during the months of September and October. The duration of interview sessions with parents of ELL’s ranged between thirty and forty-five minutes each. Each family met with me two times. The administrator interview sessions ranged between thirty minutes and one-hour and each administrator met with me two times.

I.R.B. approval was obtained from the University of Cincinnati before any research began. The I.R.B. process clearly outlines the rules and protections granted towards the participants. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance, and this was adhered to, as well as all ethical standards regarding the rights and protections of human subjects.

Data Analysis Procedures

Ryan and Bernard (2000) describe grounded theory as an interactive process by which the analyst becomes more and more “grounded” in the data and develops increasingly richer concepts and models of how the phenomena being studied really work. “Grounded theory focuses on the process of generating theory rather than a particular theoretical content” (Patton, 2002, p. 125). Consequently transcripts were collected from each interview, as well as field notes, which were then read through line by line. Key phrases/themes were pulled out for coding.

The following chapter includes a narrative of findings, which presents the stories (narratives) of the participants. These narratives are written as qualitative research, yet may include personal accounts or viewpoints that may appear to the reader as anecdotal. These types
of qualitative reports have been described as ‘anecdotal,’ as they often contain quotations used to explain a specific viewpoint or experience in narrative form (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Coding is typically identified with managing responses to ‘pre-coded’ questions in survey research. In this case, the narratives themselves were coded after the interviews to point to new categories of interest. It was my role as researcher to remain open to any emerging categories even if they did not address the research questions. The researcher’s role to allow the narrative to ‘speak’ was critical at this point of the study. Ryan and Bernard (2000) reinforce this method that in a process called “open coding” the investigator identifies potential themes by pulling together real examples from the text. The task of reading and re-reading transcripts to allow the real examples to present themselves as themes took a few weeks.

To maintain confidentiality, the only person allowed to listen to recordings was the translator (approved by IRB) for the sole purpose of providing Spanish to English translations. All printed transcripts and audio recordings were locked in a file cabinet and will be destroyed after the study is completed. Consent forms will remain secured in a locked file cabinet for three years and then be shredded. All names that could be identified, including school, school district, student, family, and city names were replaced by pseudonyms. Consequently all participants are unidentifiable.

**Reflexivity and trust building**

Reflexivity will question the researcher’s relationship with his/her object of research (Heikkinen, Huttunen, & Syrjälä, 2007). Patton discusses reflexivity as an analysis strategy by adding:
Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one’s own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports. (2002, p. 65)

As researcher, who does not share the same culture, ethnicity, or language of the parent participants, it will be important for reflexivity purposes to build trust with the participants. Making the initial introductions at their school and having the interview sessions in their homes, helped make the connection between school and home. The parents were very comfortable in their own choice of setting and having met during a time that was most convenient to them, I was able to show through my flexibility that their story was very important to me. My goal was to be honest and accurate in relating the participants’ stories about their children’s educational experiences, while being aware and mindful that I will be recounting the story of others. Patton (2002) recommends that the researcher establish a rapport with the person being interviewed. That rapport, however, must be established in such a way that it does not undermine neutrality (Patton, 2002). “Neutrality means that the person being interviewed can tell me anything without engendering either my favor or disfavor with regard to the content of his or her response” (Patton, 2002, p. 365).

My own bias and desire to provide feedback or intervention will be addressed in my work, and was on my mind during our story telling sessions. I was able to resist interrupting and showing my agreement or disagreement when they shared their perspectives as parents.

Negotiating our relationship as researcher and participant was part of the trust building that occurred. After one recording session a family asked me to help them with a school enrollment issue they were having. They trusted that I could help them as they were sharing
their experiences with me. These words rang true during my weeks of listening to their stories being told: “narrative inquirers need to be aware of the complicated relationships that develop among themselves and their research situations” (Shijing & Connelly, 2000, p. 365).

I was very cognizant that as a white, professional female I may physically be similar to the administration in the school buildings. I had to purposefully plan to address this in my design. I was able to overcome this as in all instances we met in their homes at a time that was chosen by the participants. Another way that I gained entrée with the family participants was to share my own story as a parent of English language learners and how I want my children’s experiences to be positive. “Trusting relationships grow over time and build as the researcher joins in with the flow of life” (Shijing & Connelly, 2000, p. 364). It was very important to remain flexible when setting up data collection appointments, and as such one meeting was rescheduled due to work restraints for one couple.

Summary

This chapter included a discussion of the qualitative method used for this study, as well as how data were collected, transcribed, and analyzed using coding and grounded theory. The recruitment and selection of participants was also detailed. A section on the researchers’ reflexivity was addressed as well as how trust was built between research and participants. Chapter three will present a discussion of the findings and analysis of the collected data. An introduction to the participants who shared their stories, their detailed stories retrieved from the transcripts, and the themes that emerged from their stories will be discussed.
Chapter Three - Narrative of Findings

Chapter two included the methodological framework of the study as well as a discussion regarding researcher reflexivity and how trust was obtained with the participants. This chapter provides an introduction to the participants who shared their narratives. It was extremely important to me as researcher that I shared the participants’ stories as fully as possible without my own editing or analysis. The stories shared were integral to this study and by allowing the stories to speak for themselves, it is my hope that the reader will capture the essence of their spirit in each story.

This chapter also includes an overview of the themes that evolved from the coding process. The data were coded, and those codes were assigned categories. The categories were then named as ‘themes’ and those findings are discussed below.

Introduction of Participants

In the previous chapter in the section entitled “Participants,” I indicated that I had interviewed one school principal, one assistant principal, and six Hispanic parents of English language learners. In this section, I introduce all the participants in greater detail.

Principal (Mr. B.). Our first interview took place during school hours on a Friday morning. As I had previously visited the school during open house to hand out interview invitations to parents, the main office staff was aware of my appointment. They were still very pleasant and welcoming as I sat in the main office waiting for him to return from duty outside the office. The office staff was talking ‘school business’ as I waited in a main office chair. Flyers and brochures of school events and community services were available as reading material. Mr.
B. was very punctual for our appointment and his demeanor could easily be identified as friendly as he greeted a young female student using the term ‘sweetheart.’ Dressed in jeans and spirit wear (sweatshirt with school logo), casual Friday was clearly a way to enhance school culture and not to portray a laissez-faire attitude towards academics. Greeting me with a wide smile and a firm handshake, he escorted me to his office that was directly adjacent to the main office area. Large windows that view the parking lot and exit to a small courtyard were decorated with paper plates holding the number ‘102’ in glitter. Remnants of a celebration were evident throughout his office which he made a point of apologizing for. He recognized that his office usually was not always this way, but that they had celebrated something. Regardless of the glitter, Mr. B.’s office was neatly organized and contained a mix of personal décor (toy collection and photographs) as well as the expected professional décor (certificates and books). The decorations would be explained during our second interview together as the celebration of having earned the second highest reading scores in the district on their state assessment (and having the highest ELL population in one building). He was very modest sharing this major accomplishment; however, he made it clear that it was a group effort. The previous year they had not met their goal; however, they kept going and together “from students – to teachers – to me” they surpassed their goal. Students and staff alike were aware of the expectation for success and worked together to accomplish it. Mr. B.’s motivational leadership style was evident in how he addressed expectations and overcoming barriers.

As the principal of Central elementary for the past six years, Mr. B. had a wealth of information to share. There were minor interruptions to our time together and the respect and joy he has working with his students came across clearly in his stories.
Our second session took place in Mr. B.’s office after school hours. A side door opens to a small courtyard that connects the school resource coordinator’s office and access to his office was made possible after hours. As he stated during his first interview, he does not enjoy the paperwork aspect of his job, and rarely sits in his office during the day unless in a meeting. He spends the necessary time before and after school hours to maintain the paperwork that needs to be completed daily. I saw the same relaxed and organized personality on both days. Mr. B. painted the picture of his supportive and visionary leadership. He did this by smiling throughout most of our sessions and sharing the successes and ‘aha’ moments that his staff and students experience, as they develop as learners together.

**Assistant Principal (Mrs. C.).** After seven years of teaching experience, Mrs. C. entered administration this year with a background in teaching fifth grade and working as a reading specialist. Our first session took place inside her office at the end of a busy work day. Her walky-talky was turned down as not to interrupt us and throughout our time. Our second session took place after school hours in Mr. B.’s office as her office was unavailable. We were interrupted only once by Mr. B. himself who was jovial and apologetic as he gathered what he needed so we could continue our session.

Mrs. C. had been connected to the ELL population before at Central in the role of reading specialist and had developed positive working relationships with students and families alike. Having an elementary aged child at Central Elementary – her current connection to student expectations and demands brought a different perspective to the table as administrator. The position of assistant principal generally carries the job responsibility of disciplinarian and this was no different for her responsibilities at Central. Mrs. C. handles most discipline infractions;
however, she is also very active in participating in school events and has multiple opportunities
to interact with families and staff. While not new to Central Elementary, her transition from
teacher to principal has been most challenging with parents seeing her still in her old position
and asking for help in reading. She calmly relayed how she refers them back to their new
teacher but offers assistance and information where she can.

Parents (Mr. & Mrs. M.). I met with my first parent participants on a Friday afternoon,
after completing my own son’s conference as an English language learner. She was extremely
welcoming and I entered her home to a very fresh clean scent (of cleaning products). We sat in
her living room; I sat on her sofa, and she sat across from me in an armchair. Her husband
joined us soon after and sat adjacent to us on a barstool as he leaned on the kitchen counter. Her
three sons were just returning home from school, and they were being ushered out to tend to the
puppy as I was being welcomed in. Mrs. M’s husband rejoined us as we settled in to begin
recording and even though I reminded them that they were welcome to speak Spanish during
their session, they did not feel comfortable excluding me from their conversations. They
struggled communicating their stories in English and did pause frequently to converse in
Spanish, which was then later translated to English, to ensure all communication was captured.

Their first story shared emphasized that their move to the U.S. was voluntary; however, it
was not motivated by any need. A family member had convinced them to come in 1999. They
shared their misfortune of losing three babies in Mexico, but in the U.S. they were able to have
three sons. They praised the hospital here that took care of them. Both parents had received
university degrees in Mexico where they had enjoyed a good life as “money was good.” Their
support for their children’s schooling was evident as they told of how they regularly attended

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parent conferences and rewarded their children for bringing home good grades. As it was a Friday when our first interview took place, Mr. M. handed his first grade son one dollar for getting an ‘A’ on his spelling test and his fifth grade son five dollars for getting an ‘A’ on his weekly test. Both parents expressed their satisfaction with their children’s hard work, and the boys enjoyed the financial incentives. They shared their smiles with me as they pocketed their money.

**Mothers (Mrs. S. & Mrs. T.).** Both of these participants (sisters) chose to be interviewed together during their sessions. They enjoyed hearing each other share as we met in the older sister’s home. For each session we sat at the kitchen table and I placed the recording device in the middle of the table in order to capture all voices. Each time we met, their children played outside together. There was a sense of familiarity around the house and children came in and went outside asking brief questions of their mothers. There was a lot of activity in her home, and they were very welcoming and hospitable. It was very warm during our sessions and the air conditioning unit blew cool air into the living room. I was offered something to drink each time and on our final visit enjoyed bottled water that was offered. Initially, I was concerned that the sound of the A/C unit would provide too much ambient noise for the recording; however, without asking, Mrs. T. turned it off once we got started. A daughter’s dog was introduced as she ran in to smell me, and both sisters were apologetic for the interruption. Being a dog lover and dog owner, this was not an unwelcome disruption. Our sessions took place on Sunday afternoons as both sisters worked through the week. Mrs. T’s home was immaculate and also had a clean fresh scent of cleaning products. Mrs. T. worked as a house cleaner and the pride she took in her own home was evident. Both sisters had been in the U.S. for the past seven years arriving from Mexico in 2003. Mrs. T’s three children had all attended Central Elementary and
were currently in eighth grade (at Central Middle\textsuperscript{5}), fifth grade (at Central Elementary), and in second grade (at Central Elementary). A very active parent in the school, she shared how familiar the teachers and administration were with her, and how she tries “to help the school in any way we can.” While her experiences have generally been positive, she was able to share in her sessions some areas of improvement that she would like to see happen. Since Mrs. T. works closely with the school resource coordinator, it was my impression that she was trying to paint a positive picture of Central Elementary. The last of our three sessions together was short, and there was a sense of needing to be finished. They asked me if we were finished, and I assured them that I had what I needed. We met for three consecutive Sunday afternoons, and it was clearly an intrusion on their weekend by the third and final time.

Mrs. S. has four children; currently her oldest is in eighth grade at Central Middle, and the others were in fourth grade, third grade and first grade at Central Elementary. Although a sense of contentment was relayed with phrases like “no complaints” and “no problems”, she did share some experiences that contradicted those statements. The helpfulness of the staff and the teachers was emphasized a lot and both sisters were very willing to share some stories that highlighted themselves as the ones that needed to work harder to make things work better.

Both sisters had participated in a dinner event hosting teachers and a principal from Mexico, which occurred between our sessions. The extra work that was included in preparing for this dinner was addressed and their willingness to contribute to the school event was talked about in two different sessions. They were active parents in the events at Central Elementary and as working parents their time spent with me was very much appreciated and used efficiently.

\textsuperscript{5} Central Middle sits adjacent to Central Elementary and receives all of Central Elementary graduating fifth graders. For this reason, it was given a similar pseudonym.
I was aware of not overstaying my welcome and being mindful of what days and times would best work for them.

Parents (Mr. and Mrs. R.) I had the most scheduling conflicts with Mr. and Mrs. R; however, we were all very respectful of each other’s time and commitments. We met in their warmly lit living room – sitting adjacent to each other on couches. Both Mr. and Mrs. R. moved little during our sessions, clasping and unclasping their hands as they spoke – each taking turns without interrupting each other. While the children were semi-visible in the other room, they did not interrupt our sessions. The phone rang twice during our second session, and it was ignored and picked up by voicemail.

Our first session was rescheduled by Mr. R. as he came to the door to greet me at our previously arranged time. He spoke Spanish and I replied in English, and I simply returned the next evening. Mrs. R. works from home as a hairdresser, and she had to fit in a client that evening. The inconvenience was minor, and since our times were arranged for evenings after 6p.m., I did not mind returning home to take care of my family and to reschedule my session with them. We were able to reconnect the very next evening.

As with the other parent participants, we met in their home – less than two miles away from the other parent homes. I was met by savory smells of freshly cooked dinner, and the sounds of their daughters cleaning up after dinner was heard from the next room. Mr. and Mrs. R. were very welcoming and we spoke quite a bit ‘off tape’ regarding our diverse backgrounds. They were very serious about our topic and shared stories from their educational experiences and the concerns that had with their children’s schooling experiences here at Central Elementary (as well as other experiences). They did not share the ages of their children, and it was never
determined how long they had been living in the U.S. although their oldest daughter was currently a Central student (and could thus not be older than fifth grade). Both parents were serious in tone and expression and did not laugh very much during our conversations ‘on tape’.

After reviewing the transcripts it is evident through their shared stories that they have many concerns about education in general in the U.S. and their serious tone was due to the content of their stories. While I was not able to capture every word as I listened to them share in Spanish, I was able to encourage their sharing by being attentive through my body language and expressions.

**Individual Stories**

**Mr. B.** Mr. B. is the principal of Central Elementary. His first interactions with a population of English language learners (ELL) from a Hispanic background have been at Central Elementary. While he acknowledged the challenges he faced coming in without much background knowledge, he uses that experiential knowledge in his current hiring practices. Mr. B. is mindful, however, that there are certain qualifications that are necessary to work with high numbers of ELL students that are at Central Elementary. Over the past six years he has experienced 50% turn over in staff, and so with new staff he looks for teachers that “are open, that can collaborate – and that understand that students are different.”

As a teacher he experienced students from Japan and developed communication skills as well as an understanding of cultural differences that were useful for the educational setting. He came to an understanding one day after constantly asking a female Japanese student to look him in the eye during conversations that cultural differences exist in the classroom. What he had been doing was culturally inappropriate.
Now as an administrator with six years under his belt, those experiences have developed into a toolbox of ‘best practices’. Mr. B. said that his staff needs to:

best meet the needs of ELL students, because when you get down to it, the teachers - like our teachers found here - will use those practices that they are going to use with ELL students - are going to be the same practices that you are going to use with so many of your students.\(^6\)

It was expressed that better teacher preparation could be focused in the area of pedagogy to address ELL needs in the classroom; however, since he cannot fix the past, he ensures that ongoing trainings are offered and attended. These training sessions include model frameworks for teaching sheltered instruction as well as professional development on culturally responsive practices.

Mr. B. speaks confidently about the growth that has taken place at Central Elementary, to reach a point that they have the largest ELL population in their district and received the second highest reading scores in their district. He shared more in our sessions together about students, staff, and parents than about test scores. In fact, test scores only came up one time when sharing why his office was decorated. The decorations were from their celebration of the success of their reading scores.

The growth at Central Elementary was first expressed in terms of comfort. When Mr. B. first joined Central, he expressed his concern that he did not speak Spanish very well. He was not comfortable either with the fact that when parents were coming into the building, he was seeing uncertainty on the faces of families. Mr. B. shared that:

\(^6\) Block quotations within each participant’s story are direct quotes from that specific participant.
One of the first things I was able to really see on the faces of the parents that were coming in, on the faces of the children, was just, they were unsure – I wasn’t really comfortable with that. Because I wanted them to know that this was a place that they could come to, this was a place that they could trust, and they would know that when their children were here, just like our students who are English speaking, that they would be taken care of to the highest level.

The realization was - that not all families were experiencing the same feelings and comfort levels when entering their educational setting. This led to a goal of breaking down barriers; the first was, ensuring parents become comfortable to be present in the building. “We had to start really working with our Hispanic population to try and bring them in more.” He questioned himself and the staff, how could we do that?

A non-threatening and informal way to bring parents together was through opportunities to share a meal together. A grant provided the perfect opportunity to bring parents from all backgrounds together. The goal in bringing them together was to provide opportunities for the families to learn about each other culturally and “at the same time giving both sets of families that interaction with the teachers, but then also some best practices of things they can do with their students at home.” Teachers created resources for ways parents can help at home, examples of which included finding words in magazines and newspapers and print and having their students read that back to them, or finding letters even if it’s preschool age. The benefit of these activities helped the students and parents interact on an academic level perhaps for the first time. “It doesn’t just help the students but it also kind of helps immerse the Spanish speaking parents kind of into the culture – especially those parents who are newer into the country.”
The grant also allowed for a cultural exchange of teachers. Last spring break two staff members went to Mexico, and at the time of the first interview the staff was preparing to receive a teacher, migration lawyer and principal from the same city in Mexico as part of the exchange.

We actually had a dinner the other night with them, and it was very interesting to see the families coming in and we had some American food but then they also made some authentic food as well and just them being able to come in and the conversations that were going on - and it’s funny because they have just as many questions about our culture as we do about theirs. And they also have preconceived notions about our culture, just like we do theirs. And so it was kind of interesting – the ladies wanted to really go to, to go shopping at all these different places and Target was a huge one, because they always hear about Target, they wanted to go to a Target – and just being able to share those kinds of experiences. Because then they were also able to sit down with the families that were here and being able to hear some of the interactions between them – obviously I am picking up bits and pieces with my – cause I can understand the Spanish a little bit more than I can speak it – but then also they would also sometimes switch over into English and it was interesting because they were asking some Hispanic families about schools and about how things have really worked for them. And it was positive but you could also tell that there was that struggle as well.

Mr. B. self-proclaims to not enjoy doing the paperwork that keeps him in his office. To solve that, and to be out in the classrooms working and interacting with students, he comes to work early and stays late to complete the other aspects of his job. That interaction with students
plays a major role in breaking down the intimidation barrier that can easily exist between teacher and student, let alone with administrator and student.

I don’t think they are as intimidated about not being able to understanding [sic] everything I am saying because I’ll be talking to them and they will be trying to communicate back. We get to laugh tougher and we also get frustrated together.

Mr. B. shared more about his frustration with being unable to communicate in depth with his Hispanic population, parents and students alike. The language barrier has not yet been overcome with bilingual staff; however, he shares that there are current resources (people they can call) if need be, to get communication flowing. While he expressed a goal for staff to be able to fully communicate being “a couple of years out,” he did not detail his ideas or plans to make that become reality. His ideal scenario for all parents is that communication can occur effortlessly. He wants parents to leave the school grounds being aware of what is going on and knowing that their child is going to be okay. He wants them to know that everything they came in for – is being taken care of. An extreme story of the language barrier that pervades was shared:

We had a child one day that came up and was very, very ill – to our clinic, spoke very, very little English, but was hurting, did not feel well at all. I actually had a fifth grade student in the building that in English and Spanish – could converse in either one very, very well, and the child came up and the child was serving as our interpreter. It got to the point that we had to call 911 for an ambulance to come, and so the parents came, and we couldn’t communicate with the parent either. So here I have a fifth grade boy, that is communicating crucial, crucial things about how this child is feeling and how sick they
are and that we are going to have to call an ambulance (to the parents), and then at the same time as soon as the paramedics came in, this fifth grade boy is having to communicate to the paramedics what this little child is saying about why they are hurting and what’s going on. It’s those moments that it’s just…it’s so hard.

Oral communication has not been the only area of difficulty. The school newsletter contains important notices, and Mr. B. stated that if parents can’t read English or Spanish, they miss out. While they do not have an in house translator, they have tried to use online translation programs before, with written communication. One incident provided them with excellent feedback that translation programs do not always provide the correct and intended tone in Spanish as it was written in English.

There was actually a note that went home one time that one of our ELL teachers put through a translation (program). The form that it put it into just wasn’t very respectful, and it was very harsh toned to the parent. The parent came in the next day, very very worried, very upset because they really felt they had done something horribly wrong. They felt like that we as a school was kind of scolding them. And that’s not – the child just wasn’t doing their homework – and we needed them to come in so we could talk about that. But the way that it translated out, that’s something I never want to do, I don’t – English or Hispanic – I don’t want to upset a parent – that they’re thinking we are not going to work with them, and that they think they are not doing their job as a parent.

The sincerity of these statements came across how Mr. B. envisions his building providing a safe, respectful, yet academically excellent educational experience for his students and families.
Understanding the needs of the students and families in his building has become a priority of his role as administrator. Having ELL teachers in the building provides academic support; however, he spoke about finding more support, so that “we are giving those students everything that we possibly can – to get them caught up with their language”.

One of the other things that has actually been, I guess it’s a little humorous to me, just because when we look at the notes and everything that go home, nine times out of ten they are in English. So we actually have an English class for parents to come back in, in the evenings, like once a week, and we’ve been providing that, and a lot of times, one of the things the parents just need to do, is just ask us some questions. And there is someone there who can translate for us. But it’s simple things that we don’t think about – like “what is Bob Evans night?” What are Box Tops for Education? - You know - what do I have to do for that? And I think it’s those simple little, little things, that it just amazes me, it’s so small but yet it’s such a huge gap for us. They are questioning in their mind - what it is.

Questions like those expressed above have been addressed by a very valued member of the staff. The school resource coordinator, whose office is adjacent to the principal’s office and who can be accessed directly from outside, provides another safe haven for ELL families. Although the resource coordinator is not a fluent Spanish speaker, she has developed a rapport with the families that was described as being mutually respectful. She had visited a Mexico as part of a teacher exchange, and had since shown a genuine interest and care about the Hispanic culture by including activities and celebrations at the school. These activities were also referenced by the parent participants with admiration.
She really has reached out to our Hispanic population and to our families and they really do see her as someone they can come to. Her door is right here outside mine, and so I see Hispanic parents that are here at her door all the time, trying to get help, or something translated, so they are able to be at the same level that the English speaking parents are at.

In terms of understanding language, Mr. B. knows the difference between social language and academic language and the growth that takes place with ELL. When expressing students’ academic growth, he showed his true love and admiration for his students in terms of expressive gestures and smiling when relating stories. “You could tell when students had the social language. But when they started catching on to the academic language – it was amazing because the light bulb was really clicking – and you could start seeing the light in the children’s eyes – and they were finally getting it.” Statements like these were said with pure excitement as he relived the experiences of achievement through his story.

There has been a learning curve for staff and administrators alike in the building regarding the kinds of supports that ELL students should be receiving during the educational day. When the Response to Intervention (RTI) structure was first put in place, ELL students were not included. When it was addressed that the bottom 20% of all students will be provided with additional supports and interventions, some frustration was evident. ELL students held the spots at the bottom 20%, and so it looked like the only students receiving supports were ELL students.

I think it frustrates some people because of the fact that we do have high number ELL in there but I think as soon as we start putting those interventions into place for the children, we start seeing some huge growth with them. We are able – they’re best practices - and
they’re best practices whether you are English speaking or you are learning to speak English for the first time, and to read as well. It also allows the student some 1-1 time with the teacher daily that they may not get if they are not doing it. So I have seen frustration come out with that, and that’s been from upper level people all the way down to Para-educators.

Mr. B. seizes every opportunity to address misconceptions and misunderstandings regarding the language barrier that can often be thought of as a disability, among other topics.

In the past, before we had Intervention – a lot of teachers kind of were in the mindset, (well, they’re just not getting it. It must be a special education issue). And I guess the filter that I always put it through there – okay but what happens if they were in a school in Mexico? Or if it was a Russian child, what if they were in a school in Russia? How would they perform? “Oh well they would probably do fine.” Okay then it’s not a special ed. issue, it’s a language issue and we need to look at – we need to break that down for them. And we need to look at some of those best practices and really meet them where they really need to be met.

Mr. B. explained how when he first came to Central one of the mental attitudes in thinking for his staff was assuming something was wrong with the students who were not achieving. He made it clear to say that teachers had the same “expectation of the ELL as other students but they weren’t putting the modifications into place to help them be as successful at the same level.”

The frustration that teachers exhibited regarding RTI and increased interventions and modifications did not last long as gains were visible with students. The reminder that all
students matter, comes across in the leadership style and vision of Mr. B. He related his goal for all students to be successful, and to have the skills and tools necessary for the next step in their education - middle school.

I want to make sure they are successful because when they leave here, I want to know that they are on the path – that if they want to go to college that I have had a hand in making sure that they are as high as they can possibly get. So that when they go to middle school, they are set up for success already. It also kind of depends upon when they come in though. If we have a child that comes in and they’re here from Kindergarten or first grade on – they have a much better chance of that. Some of our students that come and it will be the second semester of the fifth grade – we still – whatever we have given the other children from Kindergarten on, we try to give and just immerse them with everything we possibly can. So that when they do leave here, they’ve been given every opportunity just like the other students have been given. Obviously just not as long! So my expectations are not lowered whatsoever, there’s modifications obviously that have to take place.

Staff training has addressed “the absolutely best practices,” and more training is constantly sought. Staff has had to endure a learning curve just as leadership has. This comes with time and a strong driving vision, “but this is my sixth year, it’s taken six years to change that mindset.” Mr. B. enjoyed sharing the fact how his staff culture is changing.

What’s funny is the trend is now changing them…they are finding ELL trainings – they are coming to me saying I need to go to this. Not, I’d really like for you to go to this - they are saying I need more resources – I need to know how to better work with my
students. And the thing that they always come back and say is– OH my gosh! It’s not just ELL it’s all my kids. And I’m like “well why?” Why do you say that? You’re pretty strong about what you’re just saying to me and they are like - because those are just practices that any of our students that are struggling they need those things put into place. So seeing that fire kind of catching on, that it’s moving over to – I’m not pushing anyone anymore, they are pushing back to say – I need more –so their culture is changing!

Mr. B. freely expresses his joy in working with ELL and the population that Central Elementary currently enrolls. The work that has been done to create a comfortable community of learners is evident in how he states that students and teachers don’t balk at the growing numbers of ELL students (currently around 125 students out of a total population of 804 students). While these numbers are not statistically high like the schools have been experiencing in California, Texas, or Arizona, for a community closely adjacent to a major Interstate Highway in an urban area of the Midwest, this growth has been tremendous.

“I feel pretty blessed about having it (Hispanic population)… it just amazes me because other students, when they’re here, they don’t blink an eye. Our teachers don’t really blink an eye…. It’s part of our community here at the school.” These words are not merely strong statements of a school administrator. Through the last six years, focus on trainings and best practices have broken down language and cultural barriers backed by a strong understanding of the social and academic needs of students and families. A sincere joy in working with diverse populations is needed by staff and administrators to enable families to feel part of a community. This vision leads the staff to believe that students are “another child in our building and we are going to do everything we can for them.”
The sense of community was addressed in terms of expectations. It was important that as a building administrator he let his staff know that home help doesn’t always happen because of a lack of wanting. Sometimes the parents are unable to help due to their own educational level.

I mean, they are our kids. I don’t care if they just got here, I don’t care if they’ve been here five years – I don’t care if they’re from Texas or from Alaska – they’re our kids. And when they are in the building – you give them 100 -150% – all the time.

The respect for the parent is constant, irrespective of educational level. Mr. B. shared that at times parents have come into the office with their children and have immediately turned to look for their children to help translate. It is not uncommon for the students to bypass the academic level in language for the parents, and this new dynamic is not always received well. However, at Central Elementary there is a deep level of respect and understanding of the family culture and dynamics. Change does not happen overnight, and for Mr. B. it has taken six years to see the growth in academic success and community that he has desired. To sum up his recipe for success at Central Elementary, Mr. B. says “It’s just community – it just takes time!”

If staff turnover does not correct the positive outlook that is needed to buy in to the sense of community, there have been times that Mr. B. has had to stand up for what he believes. This has occurred with families and staff. He relates the attitude of a staff member who has had less training than the teachers have had, as a way to excuse her reaction to students speaking Spanish. He states, however:

I had one Para-educator that whenever she heard Hispanic students speaking in Spanish, she would be “no, no, no, you are in America, you have to speak in English only”. I had quite a few people come up to me and I said – no, there is no way. Finally one day I was
having a conversation with an ELL teacher and she walked by and she was in on the
conversation as well. She brought that up and I said “what? – Why? – please explain to
me” Well they are living here now they have got to capture that language – they are at
school – they’ve got to learn English, and if they are speaking in Spanish, they are not
capturing it.” I said: okay you are so wrong! She said “what do you mean” and I said –
you need to look around at our building – we are a multi-cultural building. There are
going to be times that our children – to survive in an English speaking setting – they need
to be able to ask a friend “what does that mean?” and they’ve got to do it in their
language. I think that kind of opened her eyes a little bit, and I said please don’t ever –
ever –ever tell another student that they can’t speak in their home language – even if it’s
just in the cafeteria and they are speaking to a friend that can speak Spanish. That might
be the only time during the day they can communicate with somebody and actually be
able to understand what is being said and have that feeling of being at home, and not in a
foreign place.

The ability of a building administrator to have an impact on the attitude of a staff member
who differs from the building vision is powerful. Change was brought about for this Para-
educator, and Mr. B. seizes every opportunity he can to further educate his staff and himself in
areas that need improving. Providing staff with opportunities to engage in learning and
providing them with new information creates opportunities for building-wide growth. One such
example of new information was a document explaining the differences of sounds in languages.
He explained:
Last year it was a paper that I had gotten of sounds that do not exist in Spanish. I gave it to every teacher as they came into the meeting and they were like “are you kidding? – this is where they’re struggling” – so here’s your light bulb! So as soon as the teachers had that knowledge, there were immediately able to go – and the understanding came pretty quick that this – it’s not the student – it’s not me – they’ve just never been introduced to it. So together we’ve got to change it…. I think we have those AHA moments probably more than we realize.

This vision was firmly put in place two years ago when Mr. B. told his ELL staff that his goal was to have the model ELL program.

That when other schools in our district – outside of our district need to look at a model of how to effectively work with ELL students – this is the building. This is where I want them to look, to see what strategies are working.

This vision was put in place, and the more he talked about the vision, the more the change began to occur. As a team they looked at everything from scheduling to classroom placement of students to ensure appropriate grouping of students with adequate supports.

Building leadership can only lay the foundation of the work to be done and encourage the vision to be shared. The proof of that ‘buy in’ is how the ELL staff has built a professional learning community based on his vision. The ELL staff started calling district-wide meetings for ELL teachers to get together and talk about what is working. Time for the collaboration of ideas, and sharing how those ideas are being implemented has been created by his staff. His advocating as an administrator at the district level has influenced his staff advocating for their professional learning needs to be met and being proactive to find the resources when necessary.
The imagery of a light bulb turning on is a great analogy that Mr. B. shares as he speaks about the “AHA” moments for his students as they are learning. “It’s so exciting when you see them and – it clicks and you know it’s clicking for them, because their whole expression – everything changes so much.” The same excitement is expressed when he speaks about his parents as he experiences their changed levels of comfort when physically entering the building.

Same thing with the parents because, when the parents come in and they’re registering their student you can see kind of that look of fear in their face and they are worried – they’re in a new country – they are giving us their babies. It never fails cause the longer that they’re here, the more that each time that they walk in to the building, it’s like you can see them relaxing more and more to where they feel and they know that they are in a place where they feel their student is getting what they need.

Mr. B. clearly feels that ELL parents have expressed their value of education, by being present at events and looking for ways to help with homework, even if just encouraging their students to get it done. Making the most of their educational experience is emphasized to the students. This same emphasis was placed on the parents by their parents – and so this family value is passed down, generation to generation.

You can see that with the parents that are coming in, they really do want what’s best for their child, so they do go further, and they can achieve more than they do in their lives. So that is enlightening to me, ‘cause there are some days I would much rather sit in a room full of Hispanic parents than maybe some other parents that they just kind of feel entitled, and they don’t work with you as well.
Mr. B. is out around the building throughout the day, interacting with parents and students. He expressed the joy he feels when sharing successes with students:

Whether it’s when they are coming in off the bus, or whether it’s working with them in a small group in the classroom with reading. I hopefully do, I mean I hope that the way I’ve been viewing our ELL students – I do feel like they are getting a positive experience when they are here. I do feel like they are getting the supports and just with the smiles on their faces, with the fact that I can walk into a classroom and they will be working hard and when you say “gosh, I am so proud of you – look how far you’ve come”, and they just seem to shine even more. I think for me that’s my heartfelt indicator, that I know they are doing okay, that they’re encouraged to be here and they are doing as well as they can while they are here.

Mrs. C. As a new building administrator, Mrs. C. brings a fresh perspective to school experiences of Hispanic English language learners. Her recent transition from reading specialist to assistant principal has delivered a shift in parent and student interactions. A few times she has had to remind parents that she doesn’t teach reading anymore, but will relay any information she can. “It’s the familiarity that they want to go to who they are used to.” This speaks to the relationship building that she previously did as a teacher, and continues now as an administrator. As with Mr. B. the first experiences with a high population of ELL has been at Central Elementary. Her first experiences were described as scary and exciting at the same time.

I had never dealt with ELL students and I wasn’t sure how to approach or how to talk to the kids, but I soon learned whether the student’s ELL or not, they are just a kid you have to teach.
This phrase ‘just kids’ was reiterated again when talking about incentives and rewards, how the same stickers and prizes seem to motivate all students. Finding the common denominators in how to meet the needs of children and how to motivate children was strongly stressed. As a teacher, Mrs. C. first wanted to ‘tip toe’ around the language difference very clearly present for her students. She soon was comfortable addressing individual student needs as she would for any of her students as a reading specialist, as she differentiated instruction and provided the modifications necessary. Her emotion of fear subsided to excitement as she managed to work through the change and “figure out what to do.” Mrs. C.’s expectations for her students as a teacher were very clearly the same for all students. “I had a goal and I had an objective that I needed to teach and they alone with everyone else were to meet the objective.” She adapted whatever she needed to make those gains possible, and relied on outside resources where necessary.

Excitement was clear when she said how fun it was when she was able to tell a joke to one of her ELL students, and they understood it. This level of conversation has to be built after time and trust, and she reflected on needing to understand their level of vocabulary, time in the United States and exposure to English in the past, before joking could even be attempted.

The other thing was just making sure that they understood that they felt comfortable coming to me with questions. A lot of our ELL students are a little more reserved and quiet when asking for help. Sometimes because they didn’t – especially our younger Kindergartners weren’t exactly sure how to ask for help. So that was something that I wanted to make them all feel welcome, as I did with any other student within the class.
The role of the assistant principal is commonly designated to enforce school discipline; in Central Elementary, Mrs. C.’s position also held the responsibility of discipline. The first discipline infraction with an ELL student occurred between our interview sessions. Previously any incidents she had experienced concerning discipline were referred to as ‘kid stuff’. However, an older student had pushed another student after being provoked. He was referred to as a sweet kid, with little support at home. Mrs. C. expressed her personal disappointment in this student and the fact that he “knows better.”

There won’t be any follow through at home, once mom finds out he was in trouble – it’s okay, but he was provoked and then pushed another student. So that broke my whole ‘I haven’t had any discipline referrals (from ELL students) until today. He is a fifth grader and has been here for years, so he knows what’s expected and knows the routine.

Parent interactions have not been solely limited to discipline however. One story that poses several potential conflicts for administrators to address concerned a parent who could not volunteer in the school with children because she did not possess a social security card, and therefore could not obtain a background check. When a goal of administration has been to open doors and provide opportunities for parents to come into the school building, this door had been closed for a parent due to her immigration status.

After speaking with other administration – administrative team members had come to her – in the past saying she had tried to buy a social security number, but didn’t have the $2,000 dollars it would have taken to buy one. So that gets into a whole other realm of things that our ELL parents worry about that don’t even cross our minds. So unfortunately even though she is eager to come in and help with the kids, we have to
restrict her involvement to more clerical type activities. That was kind of heartbreaking that he is eager and wants to help, we like to have parent volunteers, but we have to say no. That was heartbreaking all around.

School districts include measures to provide a safe learning environment for their students, this includes background checks. Adults who interact with students are required in this school district to obtain a local police background check. This police check looks specifically for criminal offenses and child offenses (sexual predators). An adult may not have contact with children in the school environment if any such charges occur. Without a social security number, police departments cannot provide search results.

Mrs. C. spoke about ways the staff have tried to include the help of parents not necessarily during the work day. As a parent of her own child who attends Central, she had taken home items that needed to be cut out to help her child’s teacher with work preparation. As a working mom she appreciated those opportunities to help and that other parents would be given those opportunities as well.

Having parents be aware of a student’s progress is an important goal of conferences. Translators are brought in when necessary; however, some nights there might only be one translator who “runs ragged.” This poses difficulty for parents and teachers who want to discuss students’ progress; however, the communication barrier disallows for clear communication.

One way parents have been supported and encouraged in their home support was through reading workshops. Last year there was joint collaboration with another school to provide a three night workshop, once a week for three weeks. Central Elementary ensured that parents who wanted to participate could attend.
It was kind of heartening – The mom was very eager to attend, and we made sure she had transportation - we made sure we got her a taxi, to pick her and her family up. We got that paid for and taking her home after the three nights because she wanted to learn, how to help her kids, with the reading. She spoke no English, but according to the letter that was sent home – she was very interested in it. And the kids did a section, and the parents did a separate section at this workshop and I was in there when she was in this workshop in the make-and-take part. She got all excited about how she was going to teach them – and it was heartening to see how excited she was that something like that was offered. I know we have some English classes and things that are offered here at the school in the evenings and to see the turnout. I truly feel for our ELL parents in the fact that they want to help and they want their children to be successful in school. They don’t always have the skills, in English to help them. That is kind of my stance is that they don’t have the English to understand, the English comprehension - to understand everything that is going on and as a parent how that must feel to be disconnected.

Mrs. C.’s expectation of her parents and staff is that they work together in a ‘joint effort’ to support their students.

If they are not supported at home and the parents don’t feel that’s important, then the students don’t feel that that’s important. There has to be a continual message whether they are at home or at school. There just has to be that communication in a supportive environment. I can try everything to give it our best, by ourselves but I think that kids are most successful with parent support at home.
Responsibilities of parents and the school were discussed, and Mrs. C. reiterated the joint effort. Having only limited time during the school day to practice skills, those concepts should be practiced at home; “whether its reading signs as you’re driving down the street or helping pick out letters or sounds at the grocery store, and just trying to reinforce the things that are going on in the classroom.” As the school seeks parents to support the work they do at school, the administrators offer the continued support at school for behavior. She asks parents to inform her of things that happen at home that can be reinforced at school. “So I just think the big picture – the roles would be in keeping each other informed so that you can support it all the way around.” This continuation of support will not occur unless there is open communication, which sometimes is the heart of the struggle due to language differences and the inability to clearly communicate. When parents have expressed that they are unable to help their children with homework due to not speaking or understanding English well enough, Mrs. C. expressed that the responsibility of the parent then shifts to encouraging their child to try to do the homework. She has experienced families working with tutors at home and for students taking advantage of the ELL homework help time at the end of the school day. “Most of them (parents) want them (students) to do better – than they have themselves. And I think non ELL parents want that as well. I think as a parent you want your child to do better than you did.”

The overall sense of support from ELL parents towards their students has been “extremely supportive.” They have not always been able to help with homework because of limited English proficiency. One family provided a clear example of how language has become a barrier for more than just homework purposes.
We actually had one little family that – mom came in – we had a translator – mom mentioned that the sister, the older sister of the little girl who was in second grade had to translate for them. So mom and daughter couldn’t even talk to each other. The daughter spoke mostly English and the mom spoke entirely Spanish so the older daughter had to be the go between. Which - is kind of heart wrenching thinking you can’t even talk to your own child? So that was a tough one, but it seemed like for the most part most of the ELL parents I’ve worked with want to help and want their ELL child to learn English and make a good person of themselves and get an education; however, they struggled with how to help them themselves.

Mrs. C. expressed great concern about the mobility of the ELL students travelling to and from Mexico.

There are things that are hard to deal with because you’re trying to get that consistency and given the student the support that they need and they keep leaving and coming back – those big gaps, they are missing a lot of big gaps in their developmental education program.

While there are extreme cases of poor attendance, in general the ELL population at Central Elementary has good attendance.

In her few years at Central Elementary, Mrs. C. believes that the teachers don’t think of students as ELL in a way to isolate them or segregate them. She explained that the feeling at Central is that all the kids are their kids and “they are going to do everything they can to help their kids no matter what.” The teachers do, however, know that they need to make accommodations and collaborate with ELL teachers and other best practices; however, it was
reiterated that “they should be doing for all students, they are doing them for their kids, and that’s kind of the feeling around here.”

Mrs. S. The general impression Mrs. S. provides is that her children have had a positive experience at Central Elementary, even though each of her four children has had unique experiences. Her eldest son, started at Central as a first grader, and is currently in the middle school – located on the same campus. She shared that one year he received an award to honor him for being the best student that year. This memory was still very vivid as she shared with a big smile on her face. She recalled that the teachers were good, there were no problems with the teachers and that “everything has been pretty easy.”

One of her children took a small toy gun to school one day and consequently got in trouble. They had to go to court, but she said that “it turned out okay.” This experience could have easily shifted the way her family viewed the educational system due to the court experience, yet she added “other than that, I think that all of their teachers would remember him (her son) well and say good things about him.”

Mrs. S.’s daughter began her education in Kindergarten at Central Elementary and is currently enrolled in fifth grade. She recalls one teacher who did not like her daughter.

I believe she was very demanding and exacting. She was mean and demanded too much from (my daughter). All of the other teachers and the principal have been good at helping us. There are never problems. They always go out of their way to help us.

While she shared how other families had told her they were intimidated by the school, this has not been her experience. “I feel very comfortable with the school.” A factor that
contributes to her comfort level and the knowledge that the teachers and administration do everything they can to help, is they give to the school in ways they can. Mrs. S. shared that they go to the school a lot and the staff recognize her. This provides a mutual understanding of their willingness to help and support her students’ education.

The language barrier was not a topic that was shied away from; in fact, when speaking about conferences, Mrs. S. made it clear that these experiences have been very difficult for her.

Sometimes she would decline conferences because she knew her English was not adequate to communicate her questions clearly to the teachers.

Especially when I remember the first ones, they would send me a paper asking for a conference. I would think…What am I going to do? The teacher would always ask me if I had questions and I would always say, no everything is fine. Because it is always very difficult when I have questions, because of the language. I still think that my English is very bad. I can understand enough, but is very difficult for me to explain things.

In her willingness to share her views on the responsibilities of the school versus that of the parent, Mrs. S. made it clear that she felt it was not the school’s fault or the teachers’ fault, but her own. She confessed she had not made it a priority to learn because of “reasons related to work and other things like that.”

When written communication is sent home that Mrs. S. cannot understand, she asks for help in translating them so that she can fully understand what they say. She recalls that most are easy to understand and that the papers are not complicated. She stated that she understood that
papers sent from school would come home in English and that is her responsibility to learn
English and not think papers should be translated for her as a Spanish speaking parent.

Since we live in a country that speaks English, I understand that the letters will be in
English… I don’t believe it is the responsibility of the school. They don’t have to send
them to me in Spanish. They have to send them in English. It is only logical. If we were
in Mexico, they would be sent in Spanish, but we are not there. We are in the United
States, so they should be sent in English.

Mrs. S. also shared that Central Elementary had offered English classes for adults. She
attended the first year with her sisters and was surprised at the low attendance of these free
classes. She expressed her satisfaction that the schools were trying to help build a bridge across
the language barrier but reiterated that it wasn’t their responsibility to teach her English. Mrs. S.
believes there are choices in where their children can attend school by saying, “we were not
forced to come to this school.”

Even though she has developed more confidence through the years as she attends
conferences, she expressed not being able to find the exact words she needed to explain what she
wanted to say. She was concerned that there are still questions in the air after she leaves
conferences. An example was shared of how teachers seem to always say “all your children are
pretty.” This does not always relate to the educational questions she wants to address.

It seems that even after I leave, there are always still questions in the air, even if there
have not been any problems necessarily. I don’t know how to ask the questions. But the
little that they say and try to explain in the conferences has been satisfactory.
Throughout our sessions together Mrs. S. used words like “tranquil, content, comfortable” to describe her children’s experiences at Central Elementary. The difficulty of conferencing with teachers due to the language barrier still remains however. When the language barrier was first evident for her eldest daughter who started at Central Elementary five years ago, she recalls how the “majority of teachers were nice and worked hard to help her.” The fact that the teachers gave her extra help and that her daughter passed the grade was the motivating factor to stay at Central Elementary and to enroll her other children there. When a class change was presented to Mrs. S., even though she did not feel it was necessary she allowed the change to happen. Her trust in the staff at Central Elementary is evident in statements in how she handled situations like the class change. “She had good teachers, and all of them know better what she needed.”

Mrs. S. supports all her children by being present at school events and being active in building the community environment. Mrs. S along with her sister cooked food to participate in the dinner with the visitors from Mexico. These events provide meaningful experiences and ways to connect to the educational setting that are non-threatening.

Mrs. T. During our sessions together, Mrs. T. would follow the lead of her older sister when discussing topics. Their experiences have not been identical, however. All four of her children have been enrolled at Central Elementary, three of whom are still current students. Her general impression of their school experience has been that “everything has been okay.” While she expressed that grades were not excellent, they were good. She did not have complaints to share, the teachers and the principal were said to help a lot, even with her one daughter who receives special education and her youngest child whom she described as ‘rebellious.’ Her
daughter, who was identified for special education services, was once very far behind the other children. Now, however, she is “reading books for fourth grade and she is in the third grade.”

Unaware of how other parents in different schools have experienced schools, she expressed her appreciation for all the help her children have received. “For the seven years I have been here, everything is good.”

During our second session together, Mrs. T. was comfortable sharing that conferences have been a difficult experience. Even though she does not always request an interpreter, if she does ask for one the school secures one. Her experiences with interpreters were troubling to hear. She said she felt that what she said was not always interpreted to have the same meaning. It was explained a different way, and she wasn’t sure why. One experience was recalled as embarrassing:

Last year I asked the teacher of (her daughter) if she needed special education anymore. A person came who was not exactly an interpreter. She was the mother of a child from a different family in the school. I asked the question, and she said it in a different way. They never responded to my question and I never knew what to do and I didn’t ask the question again because it was embarrassing. It gave me pain.

This situation was clearly unpleasant for Mrs. T. to experience, and I appreciated her openness in recounting the painful event. She recalled that on a different occasion when she met with her daughter’s teachers regarding special education, they had brought in a professional interpreter, who interpreted very well.
Mrs. T. clearly communicated that she was aware that if she needed an interpreter to be present, she could ask for one, and if there wasn’t one there, it was not the school’s fault if she didn’t ask for one.

Regarding written communication, Mrs. T. will find help if she doesn’t understand something. She relies on her sisters to help; however, she believes that she can understand a lot of the papers sent home herself. She doesn’t believe she ever signed anything without knowing what it was. “I have signed them with the conscious understanding of that they said.” As expressed by her sister Mrs. S., Mrs. T. stated that when papers are sent home in Spanish she thinks it is nice, but she doesn’t believe it is the obligation of the school. “They should send them in English and we should learn it so that we understand them.”

Mrs. T. describes her time at Central Elementary generally as calm. They have reciprocated their thanks to teachers who have ‘loved my daughter’ with gifts, cards, and flowers. She explains that all teachers, the secretary in the office, and the principal have all “behaved or acted well. Everything is good. I like the school because at least they have worked to help us.”

Mr. & Mrs. M. Considerable time during our second session was spent discussing a problem they had regarding their youngest son starting pre-school on time. They needed help determining what the next step was in order for him to start pre-school as they had turned everything in. I did help them with this by contacting student services and following up with the family later that week. They were very appreciative of my help.

When the conversation turned towards their children’s current schooling experiences, they shared that only one time in five years (the last time) was there a translator present for conferences. Papers are sent home mostly in English; Mr. M. believes that 90% of the time they
come home in English. They had asked for the papers to please be sent home in Spanish, yet they were concerned that they had expressed their need, and it was not being met.

Central told me – what do you need? Do you need a paper in Spanish, or do you need it in English? Oh no, please I need it in Spanish, okay, please… I don’t know what happened. All the time in English, all the time in English.

Regarding conferencing, they shared that the teacher made it clear to them that they were to ask anytime they needed to meet. A paper was sent home to request conferences.

Mr. M. recalls asking for a conference one time when his son came home with new pencils and books to find out if the teacher had really given him those things. He was able to check in with teachers when he wanted to.

Mr. M. expressed his concern with how math was being taught. In fifth grade he had the expectation that times tables would be memorized. In fourth grade in Mexico there was an immediate expectation to know the answers to simple multiplication. “I don’t know what happened, with my boy.”

When discussing the principal, Mr. and Mrs. M. had shared that they had never met the principal. Mr. M. felt this was not a bad thing, that if he had contact with the teacher, this contact was satisfactory to him. He would ask what he needed at conferences and could request a conference using the paper that was sent home.

When talking about the dinner event that was occurring the next week to host the visiting teachers from Mexico, I shared that I had never visited Mexico before. Mr. M. replied that if I ever went, I would not come back – it was so beautiful! They had shared during the first session
that Mrs. M.’s uncle had convinced them to move to the U.S. and that their move was not a necessary one. I did not hear regret in their stories; however, life was described as being easier as they made good money in Mexico.

Mrs. M. brought up the topic of languages and which grade level would offer Spanish as a class. Mr. M. shared concern that Spanish was not offered at the primary level. They shared a concern that their children were not proficient in reading and writing in Spanish. They felt that if Spanish was offered at the primary level then their children could continue with their bilingual proficiency.

A teacher told me, I need please you no speak English in the house; only speak Spanish in the house – the English in the school. I (Mr. M.) need the Mexican boys two language, in the school English and in the house Spanish.

He felt good about this support of biculturalism and bilingualism as expressed by the teachers. However, Mrs. M. shared that one time in the second grade; the teachers told her that “you are here, you need to learn English, they told me, pure English.” This story seemed to contradict the previous account that was shared with Mr. M.; however, no discussion followed about the differences. To confirm that everything was okay, Mr. M. recounted a recent conversation he had with his two sons: “I told my boys – you okay in the school – no problem? – You tell me please – “dad, all is okay!” We don’t have a problem in the school. The teachers, the principal is good!”

Our conversation ended with Mr. M. sharing about the problems he heard about in another area that led them to live in the community that feeds Central Elementary. In the other community, he shared there was racial tension between African Americans and Hispanics;
however, in the community where they lived, the police were very friendly and present and those same problems do not exist. No discrimination exists in his residential or school community, and he personally knows all his neighbors. He stated that he feels safe and welcome here.

**Mr. and Mrs. R.** Mr. and Mrs. R. have two daughters, and they shared general experiences as well as specific events about their time at Central Elementary. Participation was a big concern for their oldest daughter who was now a fifth grader. Teachers shared with Mrs. R. that her daughter needed more motivation to participate more. When this was discussed with her daughter, the daughter said that she did not understand what they were doing, and neither did her partner. The daughter blamed the teacher for the lack of knowing and expressed to her mother that she did not like losing points for lack of participation, she needed help from her teachers and she was not receiving it. Mrs. R. described this as a gap in knowing her daughter as an individual student and what her needs were.

Another experience that I had was she told me that she was discouraged when she came to school because the teachers always knew the names of the bad students who say bad things, who get into trouble. All of the teachers know them. But the good students who do good things, they don’t know those students. That bothered her. She wanted the teachers to know her, but they only knew the bad students. It seemed like she was not important to them.

Mrs. R. said that when she discussed these instances with her daughter, she felt that the teachers would motivate her if they knew her. She was constantly trying to get their attention, but instead they would give their attention to the ‘bad students.’ Even though their daughter expressed a lack of concern if she failed, this was not the expectation her parents had for her. “I
told her that she had to work hard and it would be her fault if she failed, not the teachers’. I try to help her to read a lot so that she will not fail.”

This isolated event has not deterred Mr. and Mrs. R. from believing that the teachers at Central Elementary are very good. “They are very educated and know a lot more than many teachers in other countries. I love the teachers here because they are so smart. Many of them know all about the world and have travelled.”

Mr. R. shared the expectation of success that they carried with them from Mexico. As he spoke, he sat quietly and spoke in a very solemn tone.

One of the things that I remember from when I was young about the school was a time when I got a bad note and had to take it home. I knew that my father would be angry and punish me. And I knew that I had to get good grades. Kids always knew and would be afraid of what would happen if they got bad grades. In Mexico, we would also get notes if our conduct was good or bad. The teachers would write on our grade cards if we behave well or bad with our classmates. My father was very strict and I would get in trouble if it said something bad.

This constant communication of how students were behaving and progressing academically was important to share as they are experiencing limited communication here at Central Elementary. Academic concerns for Mrs. R. centered on the fact that she wasn’t always sure how her daughters were doing. There is sometimes a lack of understanding due to the language barrier, and even when she had asked for her husband’s assistance in understanding the homework, he was unable to understand it either. “I have tried to explain this to the teacher, but my English is very bad, and I cannot make them understand the problems I have. Sometimes I
feel like I don’t understand what is happening at school.” Mrs. R. expressed her belief that as the parent it is her responsibility to understand what happens at school and that she has to look for the opportunity to explain it to the teacher to gain understanding. “Sometimes I am not sure what doing well would consist of.” Mrs. R. shared that she asks her daughter and she is not sure either when asked. The explanation Mr. R. provided his wife was that the “teachers in this country have a very advanced education and it is difficult to speak with them. I am not sure, but this is what he tells me. That is why they (teachers) are hard to understand.”

The language barrier was not the only concern Mrs. R. addressed. A statement that addressed the language barrier did not seem to capture all the issues that were discussed. “I think everything would be okay if she learns the language.” There was a very distinct separation of expectations on student achievement and level of work between their former experience in Mexico and here in the United States. A rule she did not like was the help students were given being able to use a calculator in math.

She should be learning it on her own. If they always use the calculator, they will never learn how to do a problem. They won’t know what to do if they don’t have a calculator. It doesn’t seem like a good idea to me. In my country, students spend their time learning to read and write. Those are the important things. But here, I think my daughter is very bored.

Mrs. R. shared another opinion regarding what she believed to be lacking in their daughter’s current education.

One of the things I think is lacking here is instruction about history, the history of the United States. In Mexico, they talk a lot about history. It is one of the most important
subjects. All the time, history, history! It is very important! I think it is really missing here. I will often ask my children about the president here, and about the history here, and they don’t know. They don’t know. Maybe it is a problem and I should ask them in English, but I wish they would teach my children more about history. It is important that they know the history of the country.

Mr. R. added that it was also very important when they are studying history to know “the history of all the countries. Not just the country where they live.” He stated that he felt education was very different in the U.S. He felt a flaw in the system was too much reliance on computers to find things out. He wanted his children to do more investigating in schools to help them learn. He felt this would help with the level of motivation students exhibited here. He shared that he saw a lack of motivation and attributed that to students having too much, “so they don’t have to work hard, and that hurts their motivation.”

This lead to both parents sharing about discipline and demands on children. Both parents believed that the solution could be in providing more parental discipline and for the teachers to provide higher level of demands academically to encourage higher student performance.

Mr. R. shared his ideas for motivating children. For children who like to be on teams: “there should be qualifications to be on the teams to play. If there were qualifications, the students would have to work hard to be on the team. This would motivate them. If they get bad grades, they cannot play. Students also really want to be able to drive. I think parents and schools should use these things to motivate students.”

The differences in the children were evident to Mr. and Mrs. R. They were trying to understand the core of these differences and their ideas shared with me did not seem to come
from a place of criticism, but of fear that this difference would affect their children. “I am not
sure what the problem is, but children are different here. They do not seem to have much
motivation here.”

This fear and discontent with the difference in the schooling system was addressed when
a non-academic concern was shared. Mrs. R. seemed genuinely troubled with the lunch system.

There is a big problem at lunch, and there always has been. It is very difficult for my
child. She does not like to eat the food at lunch. There is a big problem with students
gaining weight. When they go to school, they gain weight. I am not sure if it is the lunch,
or what the problem comes from. Many people tell me that there is a problem with people
getting larger here. My own daughter has gained weight. I think it is from the lunches at
school. She tells me what she ate at school and I don’t think it is good food. The problem
is that lunches are free or for a reduced price, so everyone eats them. They should be
better food. I understand that food cannot be the best because they are free, but many
students get fat from school lunches. The lunches are really a problem at Central.

As the demands on students were discussed in detail, the general impression from my
sessions with this family is best summed up with the words of Mrs. R.

They always tell me that their conduct is fine. There aren’t any problems. Maybe the
teachers are not being honest or sincere with me. I don’t know that I believe my children
are being so perfect in school. Maybe they need to tell me more, but this is what they say.
Sometimes I do wonder if they need to be more demanding of students. That is one of the
things that is needed more here.
Narrative of Findings

This section will provide a brief overview of the common themes and patterns that evolved from using open coding. The categories will be discussed in terms of the two groups of participants: parents and principals. The following chapter will provide a more detailed investigation regarding where their perceptions intersect and where they do not. These intersections or lack of intersections will provide implications for further research and practice. The themes of communication barriers, home/school expectations, and sense of community will be addressed.

Communication barriers. A lot of stories were shared regarding a breakdown in written and oral communication. While principals did associate humor with having to play charades and elicit last minute help when communicating with parents, this did not overrule the frustration that was expressed with not being able to reach deeper levels of understanding when communicating with ELL parents and sometimes with students. There was a shared concern and purposeful goal for the future that would address this area of weakness. The reality of the growing ELL population at Central elementary did not present a challenge that was made light of.

The experiences of parents during conferences presented the most frustration. Sometimes the terms used were far worse than frustration. Some experiences were embarrassing and hurtful as interpreters were not high quality, and relying on other parents and sometimes children to interpret for parents was neither culturally sensitive nor appropriate. Parents discussed a common sense of having a lot of unanswered questions regarding the success of their students, the experiences of their students, and sometimes simply how their child was doing. Homework help was not always available not due to educational levels for the parents participants, but rather
not understanding the work to be completed, due to limited English proficiency. The sense of comfort parents felt was in direct correlation to the amount of time they put in visiting and helping the school. While parents who were not familiar with the staff and principal experienced intimidation of sorts, all but one parent participant felt that they would be recognized and were known by name when they attended Central Elementary.

Written communication was a recognized area of weakness, as resources on hand did not always provide the intent and tone of the written communication in English. Parents receiving poor translations had come in to address the principal/teacher concerns prompted by their feeling of having done something wrong. While these interactions provided opportunity for dialogue around the immediate concern, the misunderstandings could have been and should have been prevented.

Regarding written communications, all parents felt that it was their responsibility as residents of the U.S. to learn the language necessary to be able to read the paperwork sent home from school. Schools were relieved of the responsibility of having to send translated copies home, and parents assumed blame for not doing their part to improve their English language. One parent participant expressed concern that when the choice had been given to receive communications in Spanish (their native language), it was not followed through.

**Sense of Community.** Through emotionally charged words such as comfort, respect, and value, the principals displayed their strong desire to build a learning community that exists for staff, students, and parents. The school worked diligently to provide outreach to bring parents and families together in the school building. These opportunities were created to gain a greater understanding of the cultural makeup of the school’s population, to provide meaningful avenues
for interaction and learning, and to continue the cultural shift that was occurring through the vision laid out by the administration.

While parents did have areas that they wanted to share that were not always positive, a very strong sense of growing confidence, and comfort was shared. Phrases that communicated their sense of having their needs met included: everyone being helpful, everyone knowing me, and loving my children. A feeling of contentment was explicitly shared and, through the many positive experiences, appeared to be a genuine thread that bound these parents’ unique experiences together.

**Home - School Expectations.** Administration were keenly aware of the value Hispanic families have on education. It was expressed on several occasions that if the chance to work with ELL families alone presented itself, it would be taken. Education was not taken for granted and parents proved their interest and intent on helping their students achieve and succeed. This was communicated not only by their attendance at school events, but in their willingness to support students in completing homework – and at the very lowest level – trying to get the work done.

Parents expressed their trust and respect of the teacher’s authority in the classroom, and it was seldom questioned. Although parents voiced their dissatisfaction at times of the content or rigor of academics, it was excused as how things operated here. Their displeasure in the curriculum specifically in math and history had not been communicated with the staff at Central Elementary. Parents valued the expertise of the staff and held their educational qualifications in high esteem.
**Summary**

Chapter three introduced and submerged the reader into the lives of the participants. The stories of the participants were shared almost in their entirety to provide a deeper look into the experiences they have lived and were gracious to share. An overview of the themes that emerged through the coding process was given.

Chapter four will provide a detailed analysis of the three themes of communication barriers, home/school expectations, and sense of community. References to current literature regarding these themes in school settings will be reviewed. Chapter four will also provide a final discussion of the study as well as implications for further study based on the findings of this research as well as the researcher’s personal experience as a mother to two school aged children who are also English language learners.
Chapter Four - Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of principals and Hispanic parents of English language learners about the school experience of their students. Through collecting stories of their children’s school experiences, I was able to determine that the key perceptions of principals and Hispanic students’ parents involved their dual responsibilities and limitations at home and at school. These responsibilities and limitations have an effect on the schooling experience of students, either positively or negatively.

This final chapter will summarize the three themes that emerged from the participants’ stories: home-school expectations, communication barriers, and sense of community. Relevant findings from current research will be included in these summaries. This chapter will also add concluding thoughts about implications for further research on this topic, as well as suggestions for urban leadership. This information will be helpful for educators and K-12 professionals who currently work in schools with even a small population of English language learners, especially in geographic areas where the growth has recently occurred.

The final summary includes a reflection on my own journey as a parent of two English language learners (ELL’s), and how their schooling experiences have motivated this research.

Research questions

As noted in chapter one, there were three questions that guided this research:

1. What expectations do parents and principals have for their students’ educational experience?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents and principals in terms of educating their students?
3. What barriers exist that impact students schooling experiences?

Chapter one included a discussion on the relevance of these questions in terms of current issues about educating English language learners. The statement of the problem section included topics such as: language barriers; misconceived ideas about academic success; home-school expectations and communication; statistics about the ELL population; and challenges these populations of students face.

Chapter two included the qualitative methodology utilized to collect, transcribe and analyze the data. Using grounded theory data were coded into categories which then were developed into themes.

Chapter three included the participants’ stories that were shared in response to the research questions, which covered a wide range of categories. After the data were analyzed, three themes emerged from those categories which are summarized in the next section. These themes will be discussed as they relate to the research questions.

Summary of findings

The changes that have taken place at Central Elementary as it has embraced the growing ELL population have been part of the vision set by the administration. Parents and staff alike attest to: a feeling of comfort with the school climate; a growing confidence in their abilities to communicate with each other; and the need to satisfy the diverse needs of their population of
English language learners. The school report card has the following statement under the heading of vision:

The school investigates options to meet the needs of the non-English speaking students through continued collaboration between the school, PTO, Family Resource Center, Student Intervention Team, school counseling program, summer school, and the ELL program.

The discussion of the stories of the participants will share how this vision statement has transcended from paper to application.

**Home–school expectations.** The value parents have for education was a re-occurring theme in the stories of the participants. There is an underlying assumption that Hispanic parents have a low value on their children’s education due to their lack of participation in school events, and limited communication with school staff (Cavazos, Cavazos, Hinojosa & Silva, 2009). In fact, this assumption is better termed a ‘mistaken belief’. This thought is echoed by Waterman (2008), who found that “Mexican immigrant parents do [emphasis added] place a high value on education and supporting their children’s success in U.S. schools” (p. 144). While Hispanic culture might appear to other cultures as unsupportive due to their physical absence on the school campus, one viable reason voiced by parents was they had entrusted the education of their children with the school. Mrs. R. (a parent) commented about the teachers at Central saying: “They are very educated and know a lot more than many teachers in other countries. I love the

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7 Data retrieved from School Report card can be found on the State’s Department of Education website. A full citation cannot be provided without breaking confidentiality.
teachers here, because they are so smart.” All parents conveyed their belief that their role was to support with homework at home.

Previous research has described the misconception that parents must not value education due to a lack of visible participation. This is an example of ‘deficit thinking.’ In Castro Atwater’s (2008) study of skin color and its impact on teacher expectations; she found that:

Teachers shared a vision of the children’s Hispanic culture as a ‘deficit’ to their success. The study revealed that this deficit thinking affected teachers’ contact with and beliefs about their Hispanic students in the form of antipathy, resentment and low academic expectations. (p. 248)

Mr. B. and Mrs. C., the administrators of Central Elementary, do not buy into the deficit thinking shared in the above excerpt. In fact when speaking of expectations, both administrators voiced that their expectations of ELL students were just as high as they were for all other students. This expectation was passed down to all staff members, to ensure that the entire educational community shared the same beliefs that academic and social success could be attained for all students. Mr. B. shared his firm belief that parents have demonstrated their value of their children’s education by attending school events, but also by helping with homework (even if in limited ways). He added, “You can see that with the parents that are coming in, they really do want what’s best for their child.”

Parents also shared their value of education when examining how important their own education had been to them. Even if the educational systems and experiences were different, the expectation of hard work and respect for teachers was being instilled by the parents. Mr. R. shared that:
One of the things that I remember from when I was young about the school was a time when I got a bad note and had to take it home. I knew that my father would be angry and punish me. And I knew that I had to get good grades.

Mr. and Mrs. R. spoke highly of the teachers at Central and how qualified they believed them to be. This led them to defer to the ones who knew best (better than they did) - the teachers. They were entrusting the education of their children into the hands of the ones who had the “expertise.”

When parents have little or no formal schooling, parents respond by accepting that the school is better positioned to transmit knowledge that is validated in the wider community. As a result, they rely on the school to educate their children. The school and the teachers, in turn, infer a lack of parental involvement. (Peterson & Heywood, 2007, p. 524)

Even so, parents accepted their responsibility of showing support for their students. Some parents like Mr. and Mrs. M. chose to provide their students with a monetary reward for good grades, while others were trying to learn English so that they could be a better support at home with homework. Mrs. T. remarked that “we should learn it [English], so that we understand.” This mutual effort helps bridge the existing gap between home and school. Mrs. C. shared her view that parental support at home, combined with the efforts at school by teachers and administrators have the most effect on students’ success. Waterman (2008) speaks to this home-school connection by saying, “Existing research reveals their [parental] high value of education and their strong commitment to support their children to be well educated, both academically and socially” (p. 158).
Mr. B. voiced his understanding of involvement, that parents are involved whether visibly present at school events or by their home support of “looking for ways to help with homework, even if just encouraging their students to get it done.” Culturally aware teachers never assume that families understand the education system in a new country. Many families of ELL’s do not believe they should be part of the schooling process (Ramirez, 2008). This does not mean that they de-value education and are absent from the entire process. Parents help in other ways, and this affirms the view from the parent participants, that the teachers are the experts in the schooling process, not the parents.

Parent involvement is oftentimes hindered not only by the language barrier of parents not knowing enough English, but also by school personnel not knowing enough Spanish. Parent involvement is an expectation that administrators and teachers both have regarding the schooling of children. Parent involvement has multiple meanings and the term is “widely used in school and in research, yet with many different interpretations,” (Waterman, 2008, p. 146). For purposes of this discussion, the term ‘parent involvement’ will include parent support at home as well as parent presence and participation at school events. Some of these events include: attending parent–teacher conferences, cultural events, and adult English classes.

There is an expectation that parents will communicate educational concerns or changes that occur in home life with school. Mrs. C. shared that the importance of communicating expectations was to “keep each other informed so that you can support it [the education of students].” As communication barriers emerged as the third theme; it will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.
One area of strength for Central Elementary that plays into the notion of ‘participation’ is that of student participation through attendance. Central’s attendance rate\(^8\) was higher than the district or state average for 2009-2010, at 96.3%. Parents support their children’s school experience by getting them to school each day. When students are absent, their education is interrupted and the parents’ value of education is questioned. This is supported by the data and from literature, an example of which follows. “Teachers’ and principals’ concerns about new immigrant parents who did not ensure their children’s regular attendance at school and did not participated in school activities such as parent/teacher conferences reflected views – as inadequate” (Peterson & Heywood, 2007, p. 525). Achieving a high attendance rate speaks to the importance of daily attendance that Central Elementary has successfully communicated with its stakeholders – students and parents alike.

Enabling parents to feel comfortable to enter the school building and participate in school events was voiced as a primary goal by both administrators. Formal events such as parent conferences and open house are not the only times families of Central Elementary are invited to participate in their children’s schooling. The staff and resource coordinator worked closely to develop a wide array of opportunities and events to welcome parents in to interact with teachers and administration. Mr. B. shared about the activities that took place as a result of a grant their school received. He said: “We actually had a dinner the other night with them (parents), and it was interesting to see the families coming in.” Opportunities for dialogue that is non-academic in nature serve many purposes, one of which is to help strengthen home-school relationships by building capacity. While other school sites may not share the value of welcoming community

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\(^8\) Data retrieved from School Report card, found on State’s Department of Education website. Full citation cannot be provided without breaking confidentiality.
and support, the staff at Central Elementary has embraced the value of having parents actively involved in the schooling experiences of their students. Personnel at one such school site shared the expectation of involvement but had not found the opportunities to carry it through. St. George (2010) said, “We have a widespread agreement about the value of parental involvement in education; however, educators do not routinely include parents in their children’s education” (p. 32). Perhaps the educators’ lack of inclusion of parents in the educational process is rather a lack of knowing how. Teacher preparation curriculums typically do not explicitly include classes on how to make the home-school connection, in a culturally responsive way.

When parents are involved in the educational process of their children, they are able to investigate the quality and rigor of instructional practices. There was a slight contradiction between some parents expecting teachers to increase their rigor of content and student work, with other parents wanting teachers to be less demanding. Mr. and Mrs. R. said they wanted “teachers to provide higher level of demands academically to encourage higher student performance.” Conversely, Mrs. S. recalled a fifth grade teacher who “was very demanding and exacting. She was mean and demanded too much.” Another topic that resulted in differing opinions was that of homework, specifically whose responsibility it was to support homework. Some parents believed they bore the responsibility of ensuring it was completed with accuracy; while others were limited in their ability to help and assigned that task to their children. Mrs. R. had asked for her husband’s assistance in understanding homework, but he was not always able to understand it either. She exclaimed that “I have tried to explain this to the teacher, but my English is very bad, and I cannot make them understand the problems I have.” The limitation of the parents’ English proficiency was not only preventing homework help, but interfered with the conversations about homework with the teachers. Another study that asked parents to speak to
the importance of homework resolved: “Parents valued homework as a way of keeping in touch with their children’s learning” (Peterson & Heywood, 2007, p. 527). While most families expressed their desire to “keep in touch” with their children’s learning, their limited access to English disallowed this. The individual concerns parents have cannot be generalized as attributing factors to a breakdown between home and school relationships. It is my belief that the differences in parents’ experiences create a clearer picture on the unique dynamics of education involving diverse stakeholders. A deeper discussion about communication will be included later in this chapter.

Central Elementary has been creative in their outreach efforts to invite parents onto the school campus. Mr. B. praised the work of their resource coordinator who had become invested in the cultural and social well-being of the Hispanic families who attend Central. When faculty members in a different midsized urban school with 70 percent ELL population analyzed their parent outreach efforts, the results were similar to those found in the stories from the parents in this research.

Parents wanted their children to learn English, be educated and obtain jobs, care for their families, and experience happiness in their lives. Parents viewed their role as providing a home, ensuring school attendance, supporting their children financially and spending time together as a family. The obstacles that parents identified were learning English, furthering their own education, and managing their time and money. (Dyer, 2009, p. 64)

**Communication barriers.** While language barriers present a level of uncertainty on the part of the parents, all families recognized their responsibility and that of the administration to find ways to bridge the gap. There were no clear solutions to this problem however. Written
communication presented more of an issue than oral communication did. Mr. B. voiced their concern with not being able to translate all home communication into Spanish; and he also expressed the related frustration with translation programs, at times causing more harm than good. One letter in particular was sent home after using a free translation website, and the resultant tone was disrespectful to the parent. Fortunately, an immediate face-to-face meeting was able to bring resolve; however, administrators were not comfortable with their inability to send important information home.

Parents voiced differing opinions on how they should handle their inability to successfully understand written communication sent home from school. While one sister (Mrs. T.) found solutions by asking family members for help, another (Mrs. S.) said she could make it through most papers if the content was familiar. An apparent disconnect on the topic of written communication was about who bore the responsibility of translating written communication. Mr. B. and Mrs. C. both believed they should send home translated versions and had previously asked parents what language communication was preferred. This belief extended from a desire to show respect for the home language of parents; however, most attempts have not been as successful as intended. In another study that addressed parents’ expectations of knowing and learning English, parents responded by saying, “it was necessary to enrich their linguistic capital⁹ by learning English” (Peterson & Heywood, 2007, p. 530).

Parents at Central Elementary believed it was their responsibility as residents of the U.S. to improve their English so that schools could focus their energy on educating their children. Mrs. S. and Mrs. T. had previously attended free English classes offered at Central Elementary

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⁹ Linguistic capital refers to the competence in language. According to Peterson and Heywood (2007), “competence in the English language is considered by the school a form of capital. For many immigrant communities, however, the heritage language is considered a form of capital” (p. 520).
and had been amazed at the low attendance. These mothers couldn’t understand why other parents in their situation wouldn’t take advantage of the help that school was trying to provide for them.

Mrs. C. voiced her concern with the disconnect parents could experience, by not being able to read school letters and other written communication. While this barrier was a major reoccurring theme, there was no suggestion that it negatively influenced their participation in their children’s schooling experience. This was contrary to findings in the literature: “a great deal of prior research that has established language as the dominant barrier hindering both school staff and parents in their desire to support student achievement” (e.g. Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillett, 1998; Diaz Soto, 1997; Goldenberg, 1993, as cited by Waterman, 2008, p. 155).

Parents shared many positive encounters they have had with Central staff and administration. While the choice was always there to enroll their students elsewhere, parents chose to stay at Central Elementary. Central had made the effort to show that students were cared for and that their educational needs were met.

While the theme of ‘communication barriers’ emerged during the research at Central Elementary, the problems it presented were not uncommon. “It is also essential to acknowledge that a language barrier is not an isolated barrier influencing parent involvement” (Waterman, 2008, p.159). In a recent study, Mexican mothers were asked to share about their dreams regarding the education of their children. “Although no answer was as frequent as those related to homework, another common answer was “studying English so I can help my children with homework” (Waterman, 2008, p. 153).
While parents navigate the educational system with known language barriers, the system itself presents its own unique set of challenges. Several parents (especially Mr. and Mrs. M) voiced their concern of the inadequacies of the school’s instructional content and practices that did not encourage inquiry and motivate students to learn. This unfamiliarity with the content and structure of U.S schools disables parents to support their children’s learning at home. Waterman (2008) captured this same problem when interviewing Mexican mothers:

When probed further about any possible barriers that impeded their own involvement in their children’s education and schools, many mothers also explained that their lack of familiarity with U.S. schools, the content that is taught there, and the way that it is taught also limits their ability to help their children as they desire. (p. 155)

In the classroom environment, teachers often hear students switching to their native language to talk to a language peer. Administration voiced their understanding of the use and validity of the student’s native language during class time especially when clarifying content. Moll and Dias (1987) found that “peer discussion in Spanish (the students’ first language) about texts read in English yielded more meaningful understanding of the texts. Unfortunately, some teachers feel threatened by the idea of allowing students to use their home language in the classroom” (Rubinstein-Ávila, 2006, p. 41). Central students have been encouraged to speak in their native language, especially at times when instruction is not occurring (for example: during lunch and at recess).

Central had researched best practices for providing positive experiences to their students that ensured feelings of comfort and support. Having native language peers available to provide language support is one example that shows respect of the student’s culture and language needs.
Another study shows that:

Teachers and principals also validated the L1’s\textsuperscript{10} of families whose children attended their schools by finding ways to communicate to parents in their L1 and by assigning buddies to their children when they first arrived at the school. (Peterson and Heywood, 2007, p. 534)

The culture of Central was poised to ensure students and families felt welcome to be themselves, and by embracing language differences, a small step was taken to achieve that goal.

Mr. B. and Mrs. C. have both had to rely on the students’ ability to translate, accessing their strength of being bilingual to help in situations when communicating with a parent was imperative. “They may take up the role of language broker, helping their parents deal with English literacy documents that are necessary for the family’s survival” (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003, as cited by Haneda 2006, p. 339).

One story Mr. B. told was when a young student was called to the office to translate medical information to 911 operators and parents, due to a very ill child. This was not an isolated or infrequent event. Rubinstein-Ávila, 2006 documents that:

Among immigrant families older children are likely to function as the household’s cultural and linguistic brokers. Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner and Meza (2003) have shown that Latino immigrant children and youth often translate and explain even complex medical and legal documents for members of their families. (p. 40).

\textsuperscript{10} L1 refers to the heritage language of families (also termed native language).
While this situation is not ideal, administrators have relied on the linguistic capital of students when they have not been able to provide the translation services needed, especially in cases of emergency.

Parent conferences were very well attended by Hispanic parents. Having translators present had not always been successful. Parents voiced their gratitude that translators were present when meetings were scheduled in advance, and acknowledged the effort Central had made to bridge the language barrier. Mr. B. and Mrs. C. viewed their inability to speak to parents with 100% comprehension due to the language barrier to be an ongoing problem to fix. Administrators voiced this as an isolating problem, which not only limited what parents would understand from them, but also what they could learn from parents.

**Sense of community.** A growing support system like community outreach and in school activities, which aimed to bridge the gap between home and school, has allowed parents to feel part of the community that administration had worked so hard to build. Teachers had bought into the vision of “meeting the needs of all their students and not seeing ELL’s as any different.” This vision stemmed from the belief that the culture of Central Elementary was not an exclusionary one, but an inclusionary one. Ramirez & Soto-Hinman (2008) summarized this thought well: “Our flexibility and willingness to learn and change tell families and students that we don’t believe that our own culture is superior to theirs and that we want all students to succeed” (p. 82).

Many schools—just like Central—are making an “effort to encourage greater family involvement, which shows an increase in student achievement” (Delors, 1996; Ramirez, 1999; Wentworth, 2006, as cited by Ramirez & Soto-Hinman, 2009, p. 79). For some schools that
includes the habitual open nights, spaghetti dinners, and late afternoon parent teacher conferences.

Ramirez (2000) offers some strategies that step a little further out of the comfort of the school campus. These strategies invite educators off campus to explore the community in which their students and parents live. A less active approach is to invite families to share their wealth of expertise and knowledge. Just as teachers have a unique set of professional and personal skills, so do our families. Enriching our skill bank to enhance our students’ exposure to the richness of our learning community does much to create an inclusive learning environment, which values the participation of the parents

Students have been able to share their joy of learning with teachers and principals and all have shared the “Aha” moments and light bulbs being turned on when learning occurred. Failures were shared by all, and successes were celebrated by all. While the journey of learning was described as a long and challenging road, change had begun to occur. Change in educator and parent mindsets; change in cultural expectations; and dispelling misconceptions regarding certain subgroups were part of the journey led by administration.

Open door policies and transparency of vision were goals of Central’s staff and administrators. As Villa (2003) said, “the sharing of information is a key component connecting the home and community with the school” (p. 778). To this degree, Central had achieved success in being able to build that bridge of connection between home and school.

That bridge of connection supported the ‘funds of knowledge’ that parents and educators both shared.
Participant comments also reflected a belief that both parents and teachers bring knowledge and skills to this collaboration, which stands in contrast to assumptions that working class parents perceive that teachers are skilled and knowledgeable and they, the parents are not. (Handel, 1999; Lareau, 2000, as cited by Waterman, 2008. p. 154)

Mr. B. shared many examples of the respect he has for parents. “A positive and accepting environment communicates that all are accepted, important, and welcome at school” (Borba, 2009, p. 681). This extended to parents at all educational and economic levels. The administrator’s vision to create a culture and community that all staff share high expectations for their ELL students and welcome parents with sincerity drives the success experienced at Central Elementary. These expectations have to be communicated with stakeholders. “Communicating with immigrant families demonstrates that they are important and that their language and culture and essential to their child’s success” (Borba, 2009, p. 682).

Parents are strong advocates of their children’s school experiences. They can negatively or positively affect the mindset their children have towards the value of education. “If children believe their family’s values are inferior to those of the school, it affects how they view themselves and their ability to integrate who they are with the expectations of the school” (Borba, 2009, p. 682). As shared by all the parents in this study, much is demanded and expected from their children, and the same high expectations are exhibited by staff and administrators at Central Elementary.

Beyond the school climate, expecting parents to participate on the school campus needs to be addressed. Immigrant parents have economic needs that often disallow helping when convenient for the teachers. There are reasons parents cannot always participate in the
traditional ways, and building leadership should address these reasons with staff. Thinking ‘out of the box’ to develop ways to bridge the gap between school and home will be advantageous for schools that have high populations of migrant and immigrant families. It will also do much to build capacity and to again reinforce that all teachers and staff are responsible for all students.

Because virtually all immigrants believe strongly in the value of education as a key step toward economic success, most immigrant parents from Africa, the West Indies, Latin America, and Asia want their children to have pride in their ethnic background. Moreover, they do not want their children to succumb to discouragement and negativism as a result of their race identity in the White-dominated racial system of the United States. (Allen, 2006, p. 27)

Parents transmit cultural values and morals through *consejos*, and in contrast to what White America may believe, these support the value of education. A person with education is stressed as a responsibility to family. For most Latina/o students, they have to maintain their native language and culture as well as learn the normative standard of America. According to Villenas and Deyhle (1999), the linguistic abilities alone are Latino family-centered and are thus not likely to have much value within schools.

**Research Questions and Answers**

The first research question asked: what expectations do Hispanic parents of ELL’s and principals of ELL’s have for their ELL’s students’ educational experiences? Parents and principals both emphasized that they wanted ELL students to have positive experiences. These experiences are made positive by school climates that embrace diversity and by teachers and administrators who are prepared for diversity. This educator preparation would incorporate
theoretical frameworks that discuss language acquisition, language identity and pedagogical
skills to include diversity within our curriculum in a way that is culturally responsive and
responsible. Principals want students to be fully prepared to move into higher grade levels of
academics and to achieve success in their academics. Parents and principals both want their
students to become confident and accomplished life-long learners. Parents expressed their desire
for their children to become better educated than they are.

The second research question asked: what are the roles and responsibilities of parents of
Hispanic ELL’s and principals of ELL’s in terms of educating their students? The roles for
parents and principals seem to be well defined for each; however, the breakdown occurs when
these roles and responsibilities are not shared between stakeholders. While the communication
barrier is addressed in the third research question, it must be included in this brief discussion as
the purpose of having well defined roles and responsibilities is not merely ownership. For
schools to work as community learning centers where the students are the focal point and all
stakeholders work in cohesion to support their success, these defined roles and responsibilities
must be shared and mutually agreed upon. With that said, parents bear the primary role of
supporting education as a paradigm at home, to continue the educational efforts established at
school. While the levels of support range from the minimum of sending students to school on a
daily basis to attending school meetings and functions, support must be there. The level of
support with homework and school readiness also has a broad range of ability, as the ability level
of parents varies with their English proficiency level as well as their own educational level.
Parents also have the responsibility of encouraging the continued education of their children by
stressing the importance of education, and the opportunities that having an education provides.
Principals are the visionaries of the schools where ELL students attend. Their primary role is to ensure that all staff members are on board with the vision that is set for the school. They are to provide the necessary training in areas of pedagogy and home-school communication to all staff members. A key responsibility is to hire staff who can provide a safe and respectful learning environment but who can also find ways to include the heritage culture and language of their students and families into the learning environment.

The third research question asks: what barriers exist that impact Hispanic ELL students’ schooling experiences? Language barriers that prevent communication are areas that have been previously discussed. Parents and principals both struggle with the lack of instant access to communication. While communication is generally about education, there have been times when emergency situations have been increasingly difficult to navigate because of having to find a translator.

All stakeholders must embrace the same vision/direction of the school, or barriers will prevent positive schooling experiences. Personal bias’ or lack of respect for diverse cultures and languages takes away from the positive learning community that is needed. Also deficit thinking (viewing the limitations of students instead of their assets), begins to tear down the foundation of social justice that is needed for schools to thrive.

Concluding Comments

Language is not a new concept, and neither is that of education. The intersection of educating students in a new language (target language – other than their native/home language) has been and will be extensively researched. “There is a myth among educators that it is difficult to involve immigrant families if teachers don’t speak their language” (Samway & McKeon,
1999, as cited by Borba, 2009, p. 683). This myth has been dispelled by schools like Central Elementary which has embraced their challenges with a positive perspective and embraced diversity as one more dimension of their multi-faceted and multi-cultural school environment.

**Personal Story: Mommy teacher!**

Eleven months ago my husband and I adopted two brothers from Taiwan. As an English as a Second language (ESL) teacher, I am well versed in knowing how to teach other people’s children. As a mother of English language learners, I am living a unique experience.

I had to navigate the path of school student services, including: enrollment, language placement tests, home language surveys and class selections, all while learning to communicate with my children in their second language (English). The nuances of learning what services my children were entitled to receive were difficult, even for someone with graduate degrees. I could not have imagined undergoing the initial processing stages without being proficient in English or having a translator at my side to help me understand what was required of me and my children. Beyond a language barrier (which I did not have to overcome), there was an issue of understanding the system. After immigrating to the U.S. at 18 years of age, I purposefully chose to attend the 12th grade again, to acclimate myself to the American school system. I did not know then how powerful of an exercise that would prove to me.

I have been amazed on a daily basis, by how brave and resourceful my children are. I know from teaching ELL’s in my workplace (99% of which are Hispanic) that their families endure some of the same hardships that the parent participants openly shared with me. Their zeal for a better future for their children serves as catalyst to navigate unknown territories and systems (namely the U.S. school system). My children inspire me to advocate for families who
have language as their barrier to fully understanding all that takes place within the school
environment. My work inspires me to develop the capacity of teachers and administrators as we
provide education to the growing English language learner population. I am mommy-teacher!

**Implications for further research**

It would be strongly recommended to replicate this study with other urban schools that
have a growing population of Hispanic ELL students to determine if the major themes/categories
are present in other schools. What is still lacking in research in this area is the voice of the
student. Student data are typically recorded in quantitative measures. To accurately gauge if
students are participating in positive school experiences, it would be logical to ask the students.

According to LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, (1994), four elements must be considered in
seeking educational excellence and equity for ELL’s:

1) Access to the full range of content knowledge that is valued by the school, community,
and society; 2) Participation in meaningful interaction with challenging subject matter,
with classmates, and with teachers; 3) Benefit from and success in learning that
challenging subject matter (Faltis, 1993); and 4) Continued development of their native
language abilities to the greatest possible extent. (p. 60)

Can educational leadership navigate the terrain of educating ELL’s without
compromising commitments to educational excellence or abandoning principles of social justice?
(Frattura & Cappa, 2007). Building leadership is urged to do more than model instructional
leadership; they also have to advocate for students who are typically marginalized. Welcoming
students and families into the learning community will only begin to build the bridge of success.
Building capacity for teachers and the parents will unite all stakeholders to invest in the success of their students.

There is power in community, and parents can empower themselves through their consejos. Sustained change can only occur when Latina/o parents combine together as a community to fight for their political power and to fight for their voices to be heard. Why have the voices of parents of color been silenced in schools? There is an urgent need for the narratives of parents to be heard, to help urban educators and policy makers embrace the dichotomy of students’ home cultures and students’ school cultures (Auerbach, 2002).

In an effort to educate our future American citizens, educators are suppressing the culture, experiences, voice and indeed the identity of Latina/o students in effort to adhere to a normative standard. This normative standard however is based on that of white European Americans. We need to closely monitor disempowerment knowing how quickly linguistically diverse learners can feel excluded. Instead of engaging in deficit thinking, we need to encourage asset thinking about families. Pugach, Longwell-Grice, Ford and Surma (2008) explains the ‘assets perspective’, which means that families have strengths and gifts that all families are doing the best they can at that time and that all families care about their children, and that all families are involved in their children’s’ lives to some extent. Students’ languages and cultures are viewed as assets.

**Implications for practice**

This research can be used to revisit school vision and mission statements as well as address critical areas where the perceptions of parents and principals do not intersect. Schools do not always need to hear what is working well, although that certainly is encouraging. Schools do
need valid data to direct their attention to areas that will have the most positive impacts on the schooling experiences of their students – specifically the largest growing subgroup in our schools today - Hispanic ELL’s. Haneda (2006) asks a poignant question regarding our pedagogy: “An important question to consider, given this diversity, is in what ways teachers can make connections among their students’ literacy practices in different contexts, so as to make school learning meaningful for them” (p. 342). Beyond making learning a meaningful experience, the hope is that schools are a positive, safe, and respectful environment where the academic, cultural, and social growth of all students is nurtured.

There is a need for teachers and administrators to think out of the box in terms of the culture they create that will either invite or deter parents to join. Some of the out of the box thinking needs to occur as we develop our courses to prepare future teachers of English language learners.

As a guest lecturer for pre-service teachers preparing to enter the work force, there was a gaping hole of knowledge and understanding of what it would entail to teach ELL’s in a content classroom. This issue must be addressed. Menken and Antunez (2001), speak to the multiple skills that a teacher entering today’s work force will need to possess:

Clearly, the demands placed upon teachers of English language learners are great. Not only must these teachers possess the deep subject-matter knowledge required in order for ELLs to meet grade-level content standards, but they must also possess the pedagogy to enable these students to access the knowledge and skills contained in the standards, and they must have thorough understanding of their student’s language acquisition processes. (p. 6)
An innovative practice that is described by Moll et al. (2005, as cited by Haneda, 2006) is to “challenge the deficit view concerning the cultural resources of working class language minority households and their children’s academic competent, they argued for active incorporation of households’ funds of knowledge\textsuperscript{11} into the curriculum” (p. 342).

For most immigrant parents and children, the school is their first institutional contact in the United States. Within schools, youth become exposed to the American culture for the first time, interact with American and other children of their same ethnicity, and form beliefs about what society and persons outside of their family expect from them. Those beliefs and expectations are communicated to immigrant parents and become a part of parents’ acculturation experiences as well. “Parents had positive impressions of their children’s schools when teachers had high expectations for their children, called to discuss a child’s progress, and had access to interpreters” (Perreria, et. al. 2006, p. 1397).

Suarez-Orozco, Pementel and Martin (1995) point out strengths of Hispanic immigrants – they do not always notice racism and discrimination but instead view opportunities. They can relate their new experiences to their old way of life and view the opportunity of free public education and the ability to live one’s dream. Second and third generation Hispanics, who do not have the ‘old country’ to compare to – are not as outwardly optimistic.

Treating all students equally does not provide equal access to education. Latino children bring with them a multitude of experiences that are different from the experiences of mainstream Anglo children. Thus, we cannot expect that the same instructional treatment is going to produce the same results in culturally and linguistically different groups.

\textsuperscript{11} Funds of knowledge refer to historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individually functioning and well being (Moll; et al. 1992, p. 133).
Who are these learners and what sets them apart from the majority of the population? English language learners face a cultural, social and linguistic challenge when entering into mainstream public education in the U.S. Their needs and challenges are multiple, and the language factor alone sets them aside from the majority monolingual population.

The classroom can offer a world of opportunity or a world of disorientation for students who are not provided support and encouragement to continue in the growth of their native culture/language as well as their second culture/language. Strategies for teaching language arts as well as content areas are plentiful however strategies alone will not met the linguistic demands of these learners. “A reductive approach to analyzing the nature of L2 (second language) learning leads to the impression that teaching ELL’s is not simply a matter of using ‘good teaching’ strategies developed for native English speakers,” (Harper & deJong, 2004, p. 155). While most Hispanic families entrust the education of their children into the hands of the teacher, there certainly exists a covert or even overt prejudice to the presence of ELL’s in the classroom. This will indeed hinder the advancement of these students’ success. Leadership is responsible for tearing down these walls of prejudice and bias and creating culturally responsive educators.

Educational leadership should endeavor to provide professional development for culturally relevant and differentiated instruction. This training will not only benefit ELL students but all students. However, this needs to be imbedded into the culture of the school. It cannot be addressed and viewed as a onetime presentation of new information or as a trendy concept. Leading staff to accept a culturally responsive mindset that views students and families as assets to the school culture is critical. Culturally responsive practices are a way of thinking, teaching,
and being that ties into ‘asset thinking.’ It is a way to bring social justice within the walls of the educational institution.

Conclusion

While Central Elementary had experienced large arenas of success in building bridges and tearing down barriers with parents, they still have a long road ahead to become the ‘model school’ that the administrators so desire. Their greatest success is their belief and understanding that the language and culture of their students matter and should be respected and integrated into their school community. “The success of participating schools in supporting minority–language students in their literacy learning can be attributed to practices and perspectives that challenge the assumptions of the deficit model” (Peterson & Heywood, 2007, p. 535). Schools that tap into the strengths of their students, parents, and communities will build an additive school model (as opposed to a deficit model) that will reap benefits for generations to come.
References


doi:10.1080/09650790601150709


Appendices
Appendix A: Adult consent

Formulario de Consentimiento para la Investigación de Adultos: University of Cincinnati
College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services

Investigadora Principal: Geniene Piché Delahunty
Consejero Académico: James Koschoreck, Ph.D.

Título del estudio: Historias nunca contadas: Perspectivas de los directores y padres de los niños hispanos que están aprendiendo inglés.

Introducción:
Se le pide que participe en un estudio de investigación. Por favor lea atentamente este documento y haga preguntas sobre aquello que no entienda.

¿Quién lleva a cabo la investigación?
La persona encargada de esta investigación es Geniene Piche Delahunty de la Universidad de Cincinnati (UC) College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services of Teacher Education Division/Urban Educational Leadership. Ella está siendo guiada en esta investigación por su consejero académico, el Dr. James Koschoreck.

¿Cuál es el objeto de este estudio?
El propósito de este estudio es examinar las perspectivas de los directores y de los padres de los niños hispanos que están aprendiendo inglés y que acuden a escuelas en las que predomina el uso del idioma inglés.

¿Quién participará en este estudio?
Cuatro padres/madres participarán en esta investigación. Usted no podrá participar en este estudio si:
No se considera latino/latina de raza hispana
No es padre/madre de un niño/a que está aprendiendo inglés en Central Elementary.

¿Cuáles son las expectativas en cuanto a su participación, y cuánto tiempo llevará?

Entrevistas
Se le pedirá que participe en dos (2) sesiones individuales en las que contará historias relacionadas con esta investigación en tres (3) ocasiones diferentes. Cada entrevista durará aproximadamente 60 minutos. Las entrevistas tendrán lugar en un sitio donde más le convenga.

¿Hay algún riesgo por participar en este estudio?
No se espera que usted experimente ningún riesgo por participar en este estudio.

¿Hay algún beneficio por participar en este estudio?
No se espera que usted reciba ningún beneficio en particular por participar en este estudio.

¿Tendrá usted que pagar algo por participar en este estudio?
Usted no tendrá que pagar nada por participar en este estudio.

¿Qué recibirá a cambio de participar en este estudio?
Ud. no recibirá ninguna remuneración por participar en este estudio.

¿Tiene usted la opción de no participar en este estudio?
Si usted no quiere participar en este estudio usted puede optar por no firmar ni devolver este formulario.
¿Cómo se asegurará la confidencialidad de la información obtenida en esta investigación?
Toda información que Ud. proporcione a la investigadora se guardará estrictamente privada empleando pseudónimos en el reportaje final tanto para su nombre personal como para el nombre del colegio adonde acude su hijo/a.
Su información será guardada en un archivo protegido mediante contraseña durante un año y luego será eliminada.

¿Cuáles son sus derechos legales en este estudio?
Nada en este formulario de consentimiento afecta ningún derecho legal que usted tuviera. Este formulario de consentimiento tampoco exonera a la investigadora, a la institución, ni a sus agentes de ninguna responsabilidad legal por cualquier acto de negligencia.

¿Qué sucede si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre este estudio?
Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o duda sobre este estudio, debe ponerse en contacto con Geniene P. Delahunty por correo electrónico (delahugp@email.uc.edu) o por teléfono al 513-578-5816, o con el Dr. James Koschoreck (james.koschoreck@uc.edu).
El UC Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-S) revisa todos los proyectos de investigación no-médicos que incluyen participantes humanos para asegurar que se protegen el bienestar y los derechos de los participantes.
Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante o quejas sobre el estudio, usted podrá contactar con el presidente del UC IRB-S al (513) 558-5784. Ó usted puede llamar a la línea del UC Research Compliance Hotline al (800) 889-1547, o escribir al IRB-S, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, o enviar un mensaje electrónico a la oficina del IRB al irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

¿Está usted OBLIGADO a participar en este estudio?
Nadie está obligado a participar en este estudio. El negarse a participar en este estudio NO resultará en ninguna pena ni pérdida de beneficios que usted pudiera tener.
Usted puede empezar y luego cambiar de idea y dejar de participar en cualquier momento. Para dejar de tomar parte en este estudio, usted se lo debe comunicar a Geniene P. Delahunty por correo electrónico (delahugp@email.uc.edu) o por teléfono al (513) 578-5816.

Acuerdo:
Declaro que he leído esta información y he recibido respuestas a todas mis preguntas. Doy mi consentimiento para participar en este estudio. Recibiré una copia firmada y fechada de este formulario de consentimiento para mi archivo personal.

Nombre del participante (en letra de molde)____________________________________
Firma del participante ______________________________________ Fecha _______
Firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento _____________________ Fecha_______
Adult Consent Form for Research: University of Cincinnati
College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services
Principal Investigator: Geniene Piché Delahunty
Faculty Advisor: James Koschoreck, Ph.D.

Title of Study: Untold Stories: Perspectives of principals and Hispanic parents of English language learners.

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Who is doing this research study?
The person in charge of this research study is Geniene P. Delahunty of the University of Cincinnati (UC) College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services of Teacher Education Division/Urban Educational Leadership. She is being guided in this research by her advisor, Dr. James Koschoreck.

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this research study is to examine the perspectives of principals and parents of Hispanic English language learners attending English dominant schools.

Who will be in this research study?
Four parents will take part in this case study. You may not be in this study if:
- You do not consider yourself to be Latino/Latina or of the Hispanic race
- You are not a parent of an English Language learner at Central Elementary

What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?

Interviews
You will be asked to participate in (4) individual “story telling sessions” at (3) different times. Each session will last about 60 minutes. The sessions will take place at a venue of your choice.

Are there any risks to being in this research study?
It is not expected that you will be exposed to any risk by participating in this research study.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?
It is not expected that you will receive any benefit from participating in this research study.

Will you have to pay anything to be in this research study?
You will not have to pay anything to participate in this study.

What will you get because of being in this research study?
You will not be paid to participate in this study.
Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?
If you do not want to take part in this research study you may choose not to sign and return this form.

How will your research information be kept confidential?
Information about you will be kept private by using pseudonyms for your names and schools in the final report.
Your information will be kept in password protected file for one year and then will be removed.

What are your legal rights in this research study?
Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

What if you have questions about this research study?
If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you should contact Geniene P. Delahunty at delahugp@email.uc.edu or 513-578-5816 or Dr. James Koschoreck at james.koschoreck@uc.edu. The UC Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-S) reviews all non-medical research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the Chairperson of the UC IRB-S at (513) 558-5784. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB-S, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?
No one has to be in this research study. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have.
You may start and then change your mind and stop at any time. To stop being in the study, you should tell Geniene P. Delahunty (delahugp@email.uc.edu).

Agreement:
I have read this information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I give my consent to participate in this research study. I will receive a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

Participant Name (please print) ____________________________________________
Participant Signature ___________________________________ Date _______
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent ___________________________ Date _______
Appendix B: Guiding questions

Open Ended Interview Guiding Questions for parents:

1. Tell me about your own schooling experiences
2. Tell me about your first interaction with your child’s/children’s school
3. Tell me about your first meeting with your child’s/children’s principal/s
4. Tell me about your child’s/children’s conversations about school
5. Tell me about your expectations of your child’s/children’s school

Open Ended Interview Guiding Questions for administrators:

1. Tell me about your experiences with Hispanic families at your school
2. Tell me about your expectations of parents at your school
3. Tell me about your expectations of Hispanic parents at your school
Appendix C: Invitation to Participate

You are invited to tell your story…

Your story of your child’s school experiences

Your story of your child’s/children’s school experiences is very important. I am interested in hearing your story and writing about your experiences.

We can schedule your story telling time and place, when and where it is convenient for you!

For more information: Geniene Delahunty (513) 578-5816 (en Español Ed Green 513-478-5551).
Le invitamos a que nos cuente su historia...

La historia de las experiencias escolares de su hijo/a

Es importante la historia de las experiencias escolares de su hijo/a. Me interesa escuchar esta historia y escribirla para compartirla con otras personas.

Podemos concertar la hora y el lugar que le sean más convenientes para que nos cuente su historia!